



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

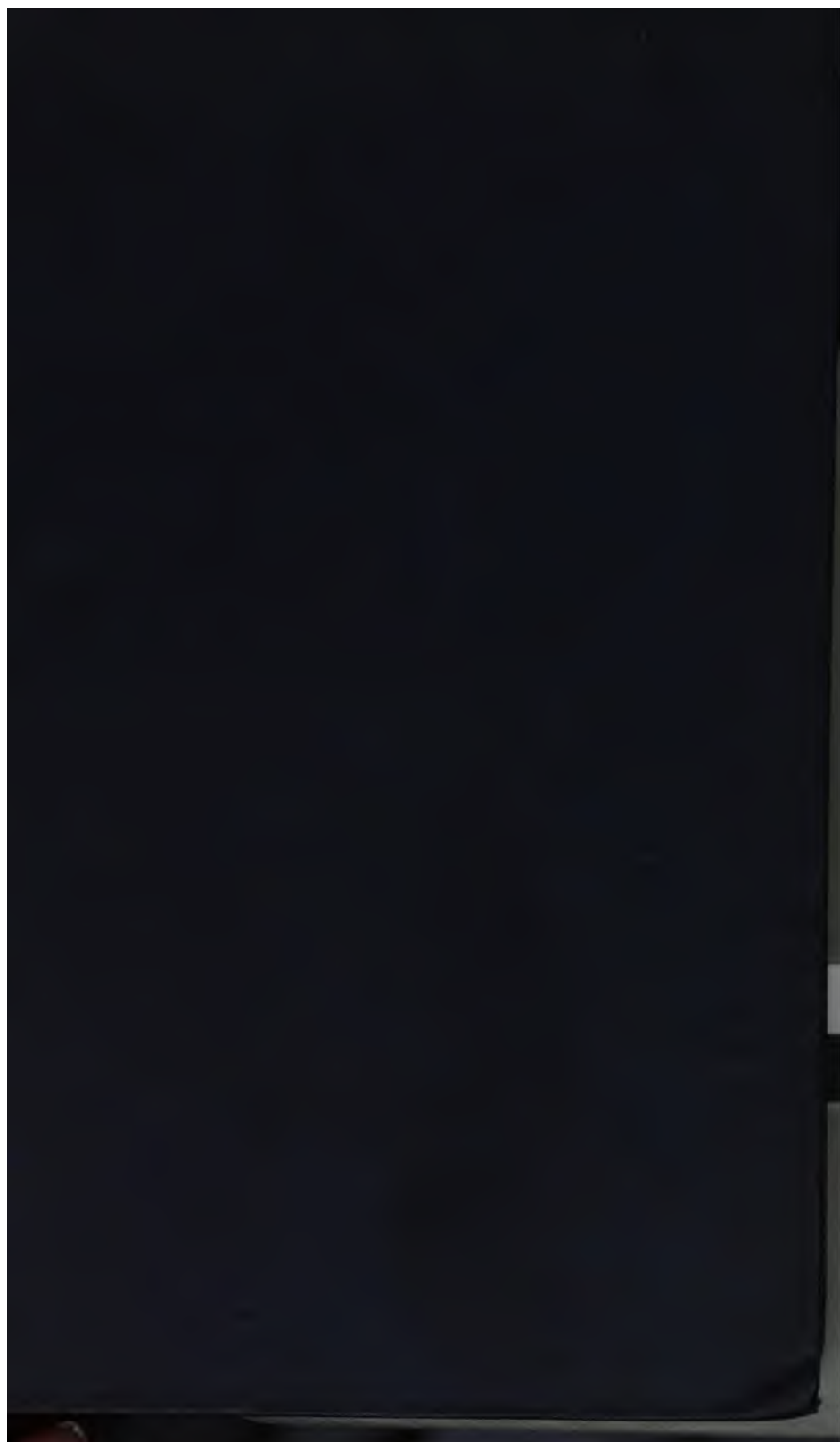
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



ANDOVER-HARVARD
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY

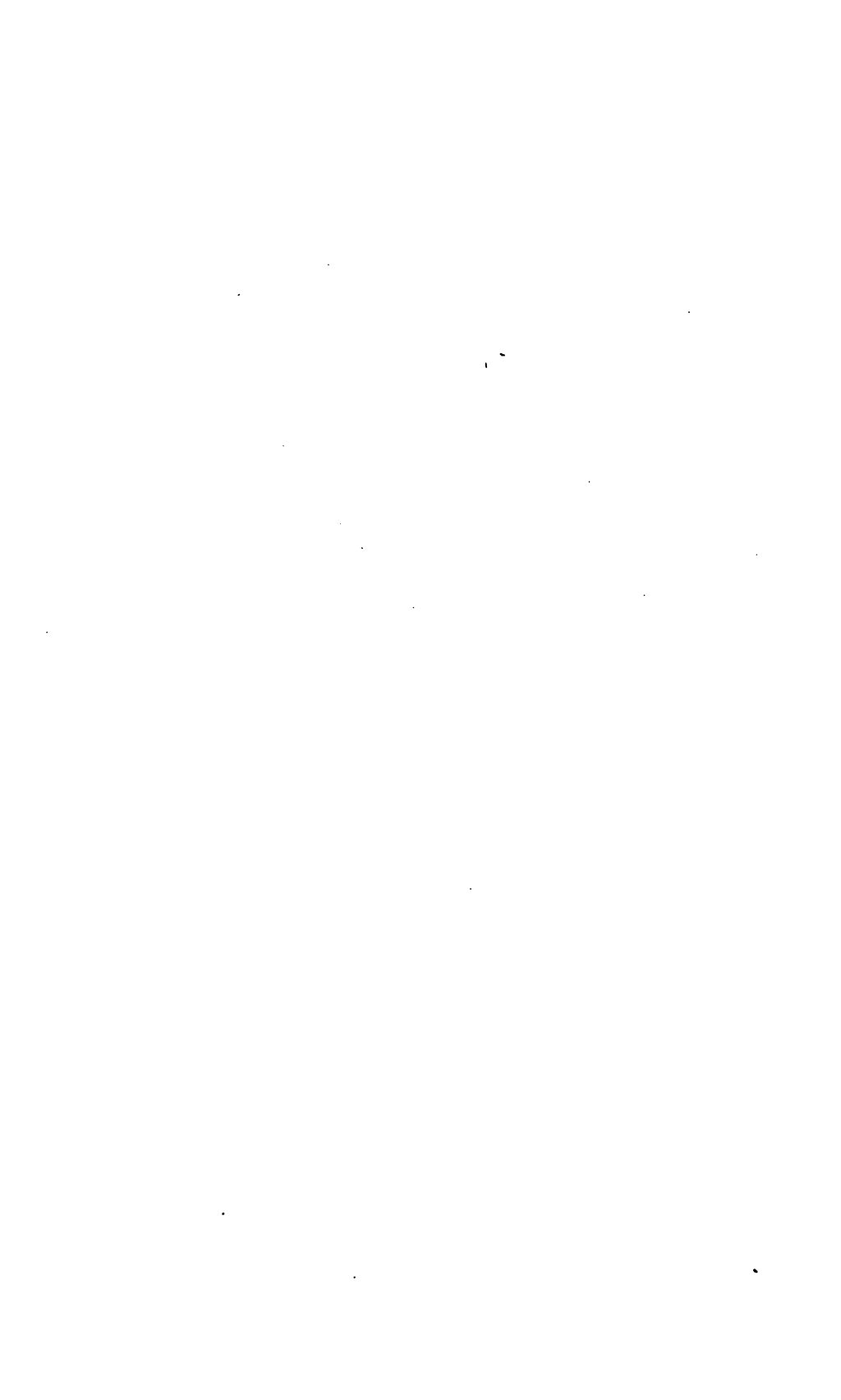


PURCHASED WITH THE
INCOME OF THE
HELEN O. STORROW FUND

105

1950.

CHRIST AND CRITICISM.



CHRIST AND CRITICISM

BY

JOHN GAMBLE, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "ST. PAUL" (TEMPLE BIBLE HANDBOOKS); VICAR OF
ST. MARY'S, LEIGH WOODS, CLIFTON, BRISTOL.



London and Newcastle-on-Tyne
THE WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LTD.
NEW YORK: 3 EAST 14TH STREET
1904

BS

2555

1G35

1904

PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH the results of the Biblical study of the last century have already been widely disseminated, few attempts have yet been made, in this country at least, to solve the serious problem thus presented to the Christian believer. If he accepts such of these results as would now appear to have assumed the rank of established conclusions, how is he to think of Christ? This is the fundamental question to which an answer is here, in broad outline, suggested. The writer has been forced by his position to search for a solution to the problem. He has felt the necessity of reconciling the conclusions to which he has been led by a critical study of the Bible, with the duty laid upon him by his office of presenting Christ as the life and the light of men.

No reflecting observer can be satisfied with the position which the Bible now holds in the mind of an ordinary well-informed worshipper in our churches. He is no longer able to regard it as it was regarded by the Christian of a century ago, while he has not reached any new conception of its inspiration by which its value can be restored and its authority

re-established. He hears much of the destructive force of criticism, its demolition of opinions long unquestioned, and he has but little knowledge of the gains we owe to it, the significance it has imparted to words that had become meaningless, and the moving interest with which it has invested the lives of the Church's founders. Thus an unobserved gulf often divides the preacher from his listeners. They may hold different views of the nature of the passage which forms the lesson or the text. Their thoughts may never meet, because they are moving on different planes.

It may, indeed, be urged that the time has not yet come when an attempt such as is here made can possibly be successful. A century is not a long interval in the onward march of spiritual or intellectual movements, and Biblical criticism may well be said to be a science still in its infancy. The writer has striven to bear this in mind, and has taken care not to claim for critical results a greater finality than they really possess. He has advisedly placed himself at the point of view of a perfectly unfettered criticism, in order that he may survey the consequences to Christian belief which the adoption of such a position may involve.

There can be little doubt that the fundamental difference between the two schools of thought, in which Biblical students are now grouped, turns upon the meaning that should be given to the Scripture word "miracle." It is assumed in the following pages

that the action of God in time has been continuous and unvarying. The Incarnation is understood to mean that Christ accepted to the full the limitations of manhood, that He remained throughout within the sphere of human motive and faculty. This belief does not imply that we are in a position to overlook the course of His life, or to bring each of His actions within some familiar category. It pre-supposes only that, if we were in such a position, we should see nothing that was inconsistent with humanity.

As regards the Resurrection, the writer believes that the transition between the earthly and the heavenly life of Christ has been irrevocably withdrawn by God from human inspection. He accepts the deficiencies of the synoptic narratives as an indication that the evidence of the Resurrection is to be sought, not in the empty grave, but in the Church's subsequent history, and in the experience of the individual believer. In the most recent phase of this never-ending controversy, it would seem as if the disputants were at one in believing that the spiritual action of Christ, His power to sustain and guide His people, had suffered no interruption by His death, and as if they differed only in their conceptions of the way in which the transition between His earthly and His heavenly life had been effected. An attempt is made, in an appended note, to set forth the facts, and to estimate the extent of the difference between the two conflicting opinions.

It need only be added that the contents of the

present volume formed the subject-matter of some public lectures delivered, during the spring of the present year, in the University College, Bristol. The book is published in the hope that it may contribute, in some humble measure, towards the rebuilding of that spiritual temple whose finished glory it will not be given to our eyes to behold. "Shew Thy servants Thy work, and their children Thy glory."

CLIFTON, *November* 1904.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

BIBLICAL CRITICISM OF THE LAST CENTURY.

	PAGE
Purpose of the book—Previous enlargements of Christian faith by new knowledge: recognition of the remoteness of the second Advent; assimilation of the new astronomy and of the doctrine of evolution—A new epoch in biblical interpretation prepared by the study of the last century—Differences between German and English criticism, and their explanation—Sketch of the critical study of the Gospels during the century—Established results—Excessive fears and hopes regarding the results of criticism	I

CHAPTER II.

CHRIST AS SEEN IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES.

Paramount importance of the Epistles of St. Paul—Results of investigation into their authenticity—The apostle's knowledge of Christ: how far derived from human sources, how far the result of direct revelation—His conception of Christ mainly determined by his experience of the fruits of Christian life—Analysis of this conception: (1) a reversal of ordinary judgments, (2) a transformation of suffering, (3) a revelation of the unity of mankind—Re-appearance of these ideas in later times	24
--	----

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST AS SEEN IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS—I. HIS
PERSON.

PAGE

Origin, character, and dates of the first three Gospels—Temper in which they should be read—Difference between our conception of the supernatural and that of the writers—Miracles—Fulfilments of prophecy—These Gospels record the impression made by Jesus on the first generation of Christians—Analysis of this impression: (1) the sense of Christ's uniqueness, (2) the peace of Christ, (3) His religious power—The same impression produced in after-ages by the lives of Christians—We are thus able to see how the influence of Christ has been perpetuated, and the relation of Christianity to the historical Jesus - - 45

CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST AS SEEN IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS—II. HIS
TEACHING.

In what sense was Jesus a teacher?—Omissions in His teaching—Its presuppositions of Jewish faith and Roman law—Its Messianic form—Nature of the Messianic hope—Shape given to it by the popular imagination—Its interpretation and fulfilment by Jesus—The Kingdom of Heaven—Its nature and final destiny—Permanent and universal elements of the teaching of Jesus—His mind was moved especially by three prevalent misconceptions: (1) confusion between the politics of religion and religion itself, (2) pursuit of illusory goods, (3) neglect of the sentiment of pity—The Christian character embodied in the life of its author - - - - - 66

CONTENTS.

xi

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST AS SEEN IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

	PAGE
Present position of the controversy upon the authorship and character of the fourth Gospel—General view of its contents—The three main sections of the Gospel: (1) the prologue (i. 1-18), Christ revealed as the Incarnate Logos; (2) self-revelation of Jesus to the world (i. 19-xii. 50); (3) His self-revelation to the disciples (xiii. 1-xvii. 26)—Symbolism of the Gospel—Parabolic character of the miracles—Spiritual interpretation given to the beliefs of the Church: the Kingdom of Heaven; the final Judgment; the second Advent; the life eternal—Difficulty of this teaching—The Gospel contrasted with the Epistles of St. Paul	87

CHAPTER VI.

PRESENT POSITION OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

Previous epochs of religious development: (1) the fourth century, (2) the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, (3) the sixteenth century—A new epoch prepared by the intellectual movement of the last century—General conclusion forced upon us by the critical study of the Bible—The changes in our view of the Bible may be summed up in the gradual transformation of the conception of God—Meaning of the Divine name in the Old Testament—Differences between the earlier and later books—Change effected by Christ—Divine immanence—Gains to be hoped for from its increased recognition—Conclusion - III

APPENDED NOTES.

NOTE A. GERMAN AND ENGLISH CRITICISM	- 135
NOTE B. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST	- 139
NOTE C. THE RITSCHLIAN THEOLOGY	- 144
BIBLIOGRAPHY	- 148

CHRIST AND CRITICISM.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIBLICAL CRITICISM OF THE LAST CENTURY.

Purpose of the book—Previous enlargements of Christian faith by new knowledge: recognition of the remoteness of the second Advent; assimilation of the new astronomy and of the doctrine of evolution—A new epoch in biblical interpretation prepared by the study of the last century—Differences between German and English criticism, and their explanation—Sketch of the critical study of the Gospels during the century—Established results—Excessive fears and hopes regarding the results of criticism.

It is a matter of general knowledge that the Bible has been in recent times the object of an investigation unparalleled in its earnestness and minuteness. This close study has now been pursued for an entire century, and still continues. The full significance of this fact may easily be overlooked. The inquiry into the origin and value of the books of the Bible of the last century is, in many respects, a new incident in the history of Scripture interpretation. It is new in its methods, and new in its boldness and its independence of tradition and Church authority.

The results of this study, the conclusions it has reached and the doubts it has raised, are now being silently, but rapidly, diffused over the Christian world. The inquiry is ceasing to be confined to the learned, and is beginning to engage the thoughts of many who have neither the time nor the aptitude for close reading. An exceptional, although by no means unparalleled, situation has thus been created. The Bible has again become, as it was in the sixteenth century, an object of keen and living interest. Those in the position of religious teachers are often pressed for information as to the drift of learned opinion upon points of history or interpretation; and behind this intellectual interest there is much grave concern as to the effect of critical study of the Bible upon Christian faith.

It is the aim of the present volume to view the Person and Work of Christ in the light of the fresh knowledge resulting from the biblical research of the last century. As this book is addressed especially to those who find a difficulty in accepting current Christianity, or in understanding what it is, an endeavour is made to state the problem in its simplest possible form. The four Gospels and the Pauline Epistles are approached with the object of contemplating the pictures of Christ they present. Thus three distinct conceptions of Christ are perceived—that of the synoptic Gospels, that of Paul, and that of the Johannine writings. In the first of these delineations we are obliged to separate the

impression conveyed by the Saviour's personality from His direct teaching. These two aspects of the subject are, accordingly, considered in separate chapters. To each of the other delineations a chapter is accorded, and in the concluding chapter a brief consideration is given to the fundamental question which the foregoing study will have suggested—the Christian meaning of the name of God.

As the word "faith" presents many ambiguities, it may be well to state that by "religious faith" is here meant the store of hope and energy we derive from our conception of the Supreme Power by which this world is ruled. By "Christian faith" is intended the knowledge and the incentive to be drawn from that conception of the Eternal Mind and Will held and taught by Christ.

This faith still exists in the world and colours the lives of multitudes. The fact of its existence to this hour is one most weighty and significant. It shows that Christian faith has an immense power of adaptation, of accommodating itself to new spiritual conditions, of assimilating what might have seemed foreign elements.

When the Church of Christ was first established, its members believed that it had but a short course to run. Their beliefs, their public and private relations, were all governed by the assumption that the end was at hand. This anticipation of a speedy close passed into the assurance of a long and indefinite

continuance without any convulsion in the Church's history. The evidences of the earlier view remained in the sacred records without becoming stumbling-blocks to the faith of later generations.

Again, we still find it possible to believe that God's fatherly hand is over us, and that the hairs of our head are numbered, although we have learned that this planet is only a speck in immensity, and that the number of street accidents in a large city is in fixed proportion to the size of the population.

Once more, while Christian faith was once thought to be inextricably bound up with the belief that man belonged to a fallen race, a race which had sunk from an early perfection and involved itself in ruin, it has been found to be quite consistent with the hypothesis that he has slowly emerged from the ignorance and sensuality of the animal, and that his spiritual and moral faculties are the last flower of ages of development.

But while the Faith has shown this great power of adaptation, it has been the object of another and equally conspicuous process. It has been informed with fuller and fuller knowledge. While we still use that name of God which Christ taught us as the highest and best, we have filled this name with meaning which has been gradually growing as each successive century has brought its store of experience. Our notions of the service God requires from us, of the ways we must take to honour Him, differ in many important respects from those

CRITICISM OF THE LAST CENTURY. 5

of men in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The call of God does not lead us to retire from the world, but to work with greater zeal for its amelioration. We do not make pilgrimages to distant shrines. We recognise that if we are to find God, the meeting-place must be that most enduring of temples, the upright heart and pure. These outward signs, visible to every eye, indicate that the general conception of God has been informed and widened by growing experience and knowledge.

The changes, however, hitherto mentioned have been changes affecting Christian faith, so to speak, from the outside. We have gained additional knowledge concerning the world, concerning our own physical structure and the processes of our own minds.

But the century which has just passed has touched the faith not from the outside but from within. If we say that we are Christians because we approach God and our fellow-men through Christ, because we accept the authority of Christ and own Him as Lord and Master, the century from which we have just emerged has pressed upon us with irresistible force the question: Who is this Christ whom you serve and worship? When we take His recorded life, and deal with it as with the other memorable lives of history, how many of the details stand sure and unassailable?

This vital question has been raised in consequence of an intellectual tendency or movement which is uni-

versally recognised as setting a distinctive mark upon the last century, and which is commonly known as the historical spirit. The meaning of this ambiguous phrase is revealed in the famous saying of Ranke: "Ich will nur sagen wie es eigentlich gewesen ist." The desire to see the men and things of past ages as they actually were, to pierce through the mistakes and misconceptions of which they gradually become the objects as they recede into the distance, to sift and winnow among the heaps of reports and rumours regarding them until, if possible, the actual fact be discovered,—this is what is conveyed by the historian's phrase. This spirit shows itself in all the historical works of the century, and gains greater acceptance and authority the nearer we come to our own time. "Before the beginning of the last century," says Professor Bury,* "the study of history was not scientific;" meaning, as I understand him, that it was not sufficiently alive to the necessity of testing the trustworthiness of its authorities; and he truly adds that, "the transformation of history involved in the recognition that the study of history must be pursued by rigorously scientific methods, a transformation not yet complete, is a great event in the history of the world."

Of this more exacting conception of the historian's duty the effects have been felt within the sphere of religion as within all the other fields of knowledge. There has been an irresistible desire to see as they

* Inaugural Lecture at Cambridge.

CRITICISM OF THE LAST CENTURY. 7

actually were the first beginnings of that mighty spiritual force which we call Christianity. One result of this desire has been a study of the earliest Christian literature incomparably more patient and thorough than this literature has ever before received.

A glance backwards across the century's labours in the particular field with which we are now concerned will show us something of what has been accomplished, and enable us to compare ourselves with the biblical student of one hundred years ago. Such a retrospect is the more necessary, as the question is often asked, why these doubts regarding the structure and the authorship of the books of Scripture should have been reserved for our own age? If these are real discoveries, it may be urged, why were they not made sooner? Of all the centuries during which the New Testament has been read and expounded, why has it been left to the nineteenth to discover its real character?

The answer to these questions is to be found in realising the change which passed over the study of the Gospels towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

Previously, this study had mainly as its object the harmonising of the different Gospels with each other. The traditional views of their authorship were accepted without question. The entire trustworthiness of their contents was not doubted by believers, and, if it was denied by unbelievers, the denial was

based on grounds unconnected with the origin or authorship of the books.

It is only when we reach the closing years of the eighteenth century that any thorough or critical inquiry into the origin and composition of the canonical writings begins. From that time critical study has been pursued with ever-increasing zeal to our own day. Any attempt to trace its progress cannot fail to suggest one preliminary reflection. The names which mark the different stages of this progress are all foreign, and for the most part German names. It is in Germany that biblical research has been most widely and diligently prosecuted; it is in Germany all the startling and revolutionary theories regarding the Bible have had their birth. If any of them find acceptance in England, it is only after many years and in the face of determined opposition.

The marked difference between biblical study among ourselves and biblical study on the Continent has perhaps hardly received the attention it deserves. Two explanations of it readily offer themselves. One is that we are an eminently conservative nation. Freedom has with us slowly and gradually broadened down from precedent to precedent, and we have happily succeeded in avoiding for many generations political revolution. We are also conspicuously conservative in our educational methods, and we are not surprised when we hear that our schools and universities are matters of astonishment to the foreigner.

CRITICISM OF THE LAST CENTURY. 9

This conservative temper of the English mind may partly account for the difference in question. Another consideration also presents itself to explain it. It is, as a rule, only the clergy in this country who devote themselves to biblical studies. The appearance of a theological work written by a layman is still, and was in a much greater degree half a century ago, an exceptional occurrence. The theological professors of the German universities, on the other hand, may be—and in actual fact, I believe, generally are—laymen not engaged in the task of preaching, and unpledged to any articles of belief. This fact can hardly fail to create a certain difference of mental attitude towards the problems of biblical criticism. A man engaged in the work of moral and spiritual instruction is not in the position of an unfettered critic in dealing with the origin and composition of the sacred books. He is bound to think of the effect of his investigations upon the institution of which he is the servant, and, beyond it, upon the religious faith of men. To this it may perhaps be added that the English Church, regarded as an institution, presents a more imposing appearance, and has touched the national life more closely than the Lutheran Church of Germany. Any tendencies which may seem ominous of ecclesiastical peril are sure among us to create widespread uneasiness.*

The difference of temper thus created should not,

* See Appendix, Note A, "German and English Criticism."

however, be hastily regarded as placing us at a disadvantage when compared with our Continental neighbours. It must be borne in mind that the Bible owes its pre-eminence entirely to its moral and spiritual value. The great personages of the Church's first days were all religious teachers, engaged in the work of establishing religious faith; and it is not possible for any one to think their thoughts again, and interpret them truly, who does not share their religious sense. Hence a strong feeling for the spiritual and moral interests of mankind is an essential part of the equipment of a biblical scholar or a Church historian. In this respect the great critics of Germany have sometimes, it is to be feared, been found wanting. They have occasionally propounded theories—like the famous Tübingen hypothesis in its original form—in which the moral greatness of the Church's founders, a greatness upon which their success depended, was insufficiently borne in mind.

These critics are also, I believe, less in the habit than English scholars of distinguishing rigidly between facts, probabilities, and possibilities. They frequently, by their way of statement, give to a probability the appearance of a certainty. The reader needs to be constantly on his guard, so that he may draw for himself the distinction which is not always drawn for him by the author.

These demerits of German criticism should not, however, be allowed to obscure the fact that it is in

CRITICISM OF THE LAST CENTURY. 11

Germany that Biblical study has, for now more than a century, been most earnestly prosecuted, and that its greatest results have been gained.

The first book in which the synoptic problem, as it is called,—the origin and relationship of the first three Gospels,—comes into view was a treatise which appeared in 1789, in which Griesbach, a professor in Jena, tried to demonstrate that the second Gospel was an excerpt from the first and third.

The first period of the criticism of the following century is filled by a series of attempts to find a better solution of the perplexing problem than the one thus propounded. We find in a series of treatises reaching across the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the striking resemblances and equally striking differences of the first three Gospels accounted for by various hypotheses: that of an original Hebrew or Aramaic gospel of which our three Gospels were either direct or independent translations or based on such translations; that of an original unwritten gospel which had attained a high degree of fixity; and that of a number of separate written memoirs or records combined in different ways in the different Gospels. These hypotheses indicate the direction taken by the critical study of the Gospels during its first period, which we may roughly regard as co-extensive with the first quarter of the century.

Now, although so far there had been no rupture between the newer biblical study and the churches, although, indeed, one of the above-mentioned hypo-

theses, that which found the sources of the synoptic Gospels in a number of separate written memoirs, was advanced by the great German preacher Schleiermacher, still one result this prolonged inquiry could not fail to have: it was inconsistent with any doctrine of verbal inspiration. It pre-supposed in the Gospels the existence of a human as well as a divine element. If the real origin of the Gospels was to be found in any of these hypotheses, it was certain that there must be in their contents error mingled with truth. The fact that a different use had been made of the same primitive material by the different Evangelists, that different meanings had been attached to the same words, or the same incident placed in different settings, precluded any thought of verbal accuracy.

Accordingly, the question could not but arise as to how far this error extended. If the synoptic Gospels differed from St. John, on which side did the greater trustworthiness rest? The question of the credibility of the Gospels was thus seen to be closely involved in the question of their origin. As the century advanced, moreover, what we may call the comparative study of the religions of the world advanced with it. Judaism and Christianity were placed by the side of other religious systems and the features they all had in common were marked. A high probability was thus created that the actual historical events in which Christianity had its origin had not escaped that process of gradual idealisation at the hands of its

adherents which marked the growth of all other religions.

But if the Gospels were idealised pictures of what had actually taken place, how much in them was trustworthy history? How could the actual facts be separated from the halo of legend by which they had gradually become encircled?

All Christendom was forced to ask itself these questions by the famous book in which biblical study broke away for the first time from ecclesiastical tradition, and which at once became the object of the most embittered controversy. Strauss's *Life of Jesus* appeared in 1835, and reduced the limits of the historical in all four Gospels within the narrowest possible compass. He announced in his preface that his book was written with the object of displacing both the views which till then had been held of the life of Christ by another conception, which was not indeed new, but which had never before been so systematically developed and applied as he now proposed to do. The two views which he strove to supplant will, I hope, be recognisable under the titles of the "supernatural" and the "rationalistic" conceptions. Under the first of these the life of Christ was regarded as lying altogether outside the laws and processes by which the lives of men are governed. It was conceived as inexplicable by the principles by which human nature is ruled. The narratives of a life thus conceived were plainly beyond the reach of criticism; for at any moment the miraculous might

enter and put an end to any further inquiry. By the rationalists the Gospels were looked upon as records, coloured and distorted by the love of the marvellous, of natural occurrences. It was thought that if the marvellous robe was only stripped off, the reality would be found beneath.

Both these conceptions Strauss pronounced to be outworn and untenable. What he proposed instead was the famous mythical theory. A myth he explained to be the embodiment, in the shape of an historical narration, of some idea deeply rooted in the mind of an age, an embodiment as unconscious as the formation of a crystal, or the refractions of the prism. He gave as an illustration of a pure myth the rending of the veil of the temple described by St. Matthew. Here was an idea unconsciously translated into a fact. But he insisted that the influences in which the myth has its origin were to be seen along the whole course of the Gospel narrative of the life of Christ.

According to this great though destructive critic, whose book passed, like Shelley's west wind, destroying and healing across a lethargic Christendom, the historical character of any early narrative was to be suspected which represented God as interfering directly, and not by the agency of natural processes, with the affairs of men.

As there are many traces of such intervention in the Gospels, he regarded them as open to this suspicion. He proceeded to scrutinise them section by

section, comparing the different narratives with each other and marking their inconsistencies, with the result that he found the smallest possible residuum of historical fact.

Looking back upon this memorable book with the dispassionateness which the lapse of time makes easy, we can recognise the service it rendered, and also mark the point where it left the problem.

It is not now doubted by any scholar that the picture of Christ presented by the Gospels is one relative to the thoughts of the first generation of Christians. What we see is the figure of Christ as He seemed to them, painted with the colours they were in the habit of using. Had we witnessed His life and yet retained our mental equipment, our report would, to use Dr. Sanday's language, be widely different.

But this famous life of Jesus stopped with this purely negative result. At the end of each section we reach invariably the unsatisfying conclusion that the fact could not have been as the Evangelists described it. We inevitably ask with ever-growing curiosity, what then was the actual fact? If the great subject of the book was not as He is here painted, what was He? Did the whole mighty movement that we call Christianity originate in nothingness? To these questions the book had nothing to offer that could be called an answer, for the very sufficient reason that its author set to work upon his great task without any preliminary investi-

gation of his sources. He reached the conclusion that the Gospels were mythical narratives, by comparing them one with another, and by marking the similarity they bore to the mythical narratives of other religions. But he did not further consider what they were nor how they came to be composed. He disregarded the labour of the first quarter of the century, because he had brought the investigation to a point where, as he thought, this labour had become needless.*

It was reserved for one with whom Strauss's relations were of the closest, Ferdinand Christian Baur, to offer a solution of the problem, which, although it also lacked finality, yet had the effect of greatly advancing the study of the New Testament. "The failure of the Tübingen School"—*i.e.*, the pupils whom Baur gathered round his chair in Tübingen—says Dr. Fairbairn with much truth, "was far from absolute; was, indeed, in some essential respects, equal to the most splendid success. Their method and many of their results remain a precious and inalienable inheritance, which every explorer in the same field must possess before he can hope to succeed."†

The aim of this great critic—the most potent force

* The new *Life of Jesus* in which Strauss endeavoured to supply the above deficiencies, examining the sources on the lines of Baur, and setting forth more fully the historical residuum, did not appear till 1864.

† *Christ in Modern Theology.*

in biblical studies of the nineteenth century—was to elucidate, further than his pupil and friend had done, the nature and origin of the Gospels. With the ultimate object of exhibiting the history of early Christianity, he took as his starting-point the earliest authentic Christian literature. He examined this literature with the view of discovering the contemporary situation which it implied; having discovered this situation, he then moved backwards, with the key thus found in his hands, and used this key as a means of testing the genuineness of the books which dealt with the earlier periods, or were of more doubtful origin.

Following this method, he began his investigation with the four epistles of St. Paul whose authenticity he regarded as beyond all doubt: those to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians. These pointed to the presence within the existing Church of two conflicting elements, which were still striving for supremacy—a Jewish particularism which was labouring to make Christianity a Jewish sect, and a Pauline universalism which was striving to carry Christianity beyond the limits of its parent faith, and to make it a world-wide religion.

Finding these epistles pervaded by the breath of this conflict, he concluded that it must have left a deep impress upon the whole of the Apostolic age. He accordingly approached the Gospels in order to observe the phases of this momentous struggle which they severally exhibited, or the relation in which they

stood to it. The position of two of them seemed to him to be at once apparent. In the fourth Gospel he found the life of Christ presented from a point of view where the earlier conflict had been transcended, and the dissonant notes had blended into harmony. The higher unity had here been plainly reached, and he accordingly placed the composition of the Gospel at the time which seemed best to accord with such a consummation, at a date lying between the years 130 and 170.

The third Gospel, in its presentation of Christ as the light of the Gentiles, the friend of those outside the Law, bore with equal plainness the impress of the Pauline spirit. In the other two Gospels he recognised that the marks of tendency were not equally conspicuous, although he urged that they both naturally took their places as incidents in the great struggle which formed the first stage in the onward march of Christianity. In Matthew he found the earliest and most authentic presentation of the life of Christ. The second Gospel seemed to him to be an abridgment of the first and third without the distinctive features of either. All four Gospels were thus, as he expressed it, tendency narratives, written under the influence of that conception of Christianity which was the prevalent one within the environment from which the Gospel emanated.

This brief account of the work of the man of whom Mark Pattison said, in 1857, that he had made the last twenty years contribute more to the knowledge

of the first three centuries than the two hundred years preceding, will be sufficient to show his great speculative ability. And he did unquestionably for the first time fix attention upon that conflict which is a key to so much in the early history of Christianity—the struggle with Jewish particularism. He exaggerated, as further investigation showed, the reach and intensity of this struggle. Still it remains true that we shall neither understand Gospels nor Epistles unless we remember that our Lord's first followers did take opposite views of the relation in which their faith in Christ placed them towards Judaism, and towards the ancient people of God.

But the fundamental shortcoming of this famous hypothesis was the uncertainty in which it left the first beginning of Christianity. It showed us a movement of thought from particularism to universalism, and then upwards towards a conception embracing both. It revealed with great distinctness an imposing figure to whose intervention the whole movement seemed to be largely due. But the Person in whom the movement admittedly had its beginning—of whom Paul, powerful though his intervention was, only professed to be the servant and apostle—this mysterious Person the hypothesis left in deep shadow.

The book in which Baur unfolded his theory of the character and origin of the Gospels appeared in 1847. Since that date, Gospel study, warned by his errors and aided by his labours, has directed its efforts chiefly towards the point which he neglected. The

last half of the century is not distinguished by any of the startling generalisations which marked the earlier half. On the other hand, the books of the New Testament, and most of the other remains of early Christian literature, have been the objects of the most patient and continuous study. Only those who make such subjects their special concern can form any notion of the extent and value of the biblical literature which has issued within the last fifty years from the printing presses of Germany. The synoptic Gospels, in particular, have been scrutinised with the most minute care, with the single object of discovering, from an inspection of their contents, their relation to each other and their origin. Nor have English and Scotch scholars failed to do their part. The labours of Westcott and Hort have contributed much towards that great result—the establishment of an accurate Greek text of the New Testament. The writings of Lightfoot are of immense value to the student of St. Paul. The commentary of Jowett, although published in 1855, continues to place many readers under a heavy debt of gratitude. There has also been much valuable work done in Scotland.

As a result of this minute study of the Gospels practical unanimity has been reached on some important points affecting their nature and their origin.

It is universally* believed that the three synoptic

* An exception to this statement is Mr. Wright, the author of a valuable synopsis of the Gospels in Greek, who still holds firmly to the hypothesis that the original source was an oral one.

CRITICISM OF THE LAST CENTURY. 21

Gospels are based, as regards the greater part of their contents, upon two antecedent documents, one identical, or almost identical, with our second Gospel, the other a collection of our Lord's sayings with some occasional pieces of narrative. As the synoptic problem comes before us directly in a subsequent chapter, it is not further dwelt upon here.

Such is a brief account of the chief moments of an eventful century's study. Every stage of the long inquiry has had its results, every incident has contributed to form our present situation.

If we accept what may be looked upon as the established results of this long investigation, how must we now think of the person and work of Christ? A careful study of the four pictures which it is the object of the following chapters to unfold will, I believe, convince the reader that we may easily entertain exaggerated fears, and also exaggerated hopes, of what Biblical criticism has done or can do.

Although, while we read the Gospels by the light of recent criticism, we are continually reminded of the relativity of their narrative, forced to realise the great difference of mental and moral atmosphere separating their age and ours, although we often feel uncertain how far the actual thought of Christ has really reached us through the hindrances put in its way by language and transmission, we have no doubt that we are in real and close contact with an

actual person and an intelligible, although quite unique, character. There are many occasions on which we feel that we see His features unmistakably, many words which make us keenly sensible of His power. Our sense of this power is so real, that we find it a quite adequate source for the stream, mighty as it is, of which it has always been believed to be the origin. Recent biblical study has, the writer honestly believes, done nothing to dethrone Christ from His place as the author and founder of the faith of Christians. To be a Christian is still to follow Christ, to make that relationship to the Unseen Goodness which Christ possessed and communicated one's own.

On the other hand, we may expect from criticism a service which it cannot render. We often hear the phrase "back to Christ" used to suggest that our Christianity would be better if we could strip away everything that had gathered round it in the centuries between us and Jesus, and restore it to what it was in His day. This would be to make the mistake of supposing that the life of a plant is revealed more truly in the seed than in the full-grown tree. The life and the words of Christ were, to use His own image, seed sown in the heart of man which has borne fruit a hundred-fold. "We must," in the words of the present Master of Balliol, "regard Christ as living in and through His Church and revealing himself more and more fully in it. We must treat him as a spirit which finds new organs for

CRITICISM OF THE LAST CENTURY. 23

itself in every generation, and which through these organs is continually developing new powers and assimilating new elements of human life. We must, to use the expression of Tennyson, look to the 'Christ that is, and the Christ that is to be,' as much as to the Christ that has been, as the centre of our hopes for humanity." *

* Article on "Christ and Christianity" in the *New World*.

CHAPTER II.

CHRIST AS SEEN IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES.

Paramount importance of the Epistles of St. Paul—Results of investigation into their authenticity—The apostle's knowledge of Christ: how far derived from human sources, how far the result of direct revelation—His conception of Christ mainly determined by his experience of the fruits of Christian life—Analysis of this conception: (1) a reversal of ordinary judgments, (2) a transformation of suffering, (3) a revelation of the unity of mankind—Reappearance of these ideas in later times.

EVERY historical study of the person and work of Christ must find its starting-point in the writings of St. Paul. It is not merely that these writings form the earliest Christian literature, nor that they are so full a revelation of the character and the motives of their author: it is also that they are the first presentation of what was afterwards to be the normal form of Christianity. St. Paul, unlike those before him in the faith, had never felt the personal influence of Jesus; his contact with the Master was, like that of the succeeding generations, a contact of spirit with spirit.

It was, as we have seen, around the Apostle, and his part in the establishment of the Faith, that one of the most momentous theological battles of the last century was waged. That battle is now a thing of

the past, and we can speak positively about its results. Although it exaggerated the part which the Apostle had played, it yet revealed his greatness, and the real nature of his task. The controversy regarding the claims of the Law had not the supreme importance assigned to it by scholars of the Tübingen school; nor did further study bear out the contention that the Apostle's position was really one of such splendid isolation as these scholars supposed. On the contrary, he seems to have been only the chief of many who perceived simultaneously that the faith of Christ was to be a world-wide religion.

Yet Baur's memorable book, *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ*, which appeared in 1845, imparted to the life of its subject an interest which it had long ceased to possess. It invested it with the pathos that belongs to the solitary upholder of a truth from which the world still shrinks. In this book St. Paul was seen distrusted not only by the Jews whom he had left, but also by many of the Christians whom he had joined. Much of his language which had hitherto been meaningless was filled with life and reality. His boastings and protestations, which before had seemed to be the mere outcome of egoism, were explained when his real position was understood. His passionate assertions that he was indeed the minister of Christ assumed a new and most moving aspect when it was seen that he was pleading for the reality of his own spiritual contact with his Master, maintaining that he had a right to speak in the name of

Christ, although he had never walked and talked with Jesus.

It may safely be asserted that St. Paul has emerged from this conflict fought around his name a far more intelligible and commanding figure. If Bossuet's eulogy on the Apostle be compared with Jowett's essay on the character of St. Paul, our debt to the intervening criticism will be at once perceived. It is no longer believed by scholars of any school that a circle can be drawn around the apostolic age to separate it markedly from the ages which follow. We all assume that the divine purposes worked themselves out in it through the errors and frailties of men no less distinctly than they have done in succeeding centuries. We are not afraid, we are glad, to recognise in the great Apostle the same passions we know so well in ourselves. We perceive an onward progress in his thoughts; we notice the indications of growth in his mind, as it ripened under the training of the Spirit of Truth.

It is the object of the present chapter to exhibit on the existing basis of knowledge and inquiry, the Apostle's relation to Christ, and the influence upon his character and life of the conception he formed. These are questions upon which large treatises have been written; but a brief survey, if only it be accurate, may present the essential facts and stimulate deeper study.

It is unfortunately necessary, before we approach the subject itself, to say something of the genuineness

of the writings upon which our knowledge of the Apostle rests—the Pauline Epistles.

It is well known that doubts have been widely entertained in recent years regarding the authorship of many of the Epistles ascribed to St. Paul. These doubts rest mainly, if not exclusively, upon what is called internal evidence. The outward attestation of all the Epistles bearing the name of St. Paul, if we except the Epistle to the Hebrews, is practically of equal strength. But the Epistles, when their contents are minutely examined, are seen to exhibit differences in their points of view, and also to presuppose different environments. It must suffice to say here that the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, and, in a measure, also the Philippians, all imply that the conflict with Judaistic Christianity has not yet been closed. The sounds of this battle are in our ears while we read. When we pass to the Ephesians and Colossians, different questions are filling the minds of the writer and his readers. The churches addressed consist in both these cases of Gentile Christians, to whom their relation to the Mosaic Law presents no difficulty. They appear never to have been touched by the controversy, which has left elsewhere so many traces of its presence, or to have left it so far behind that it has been forgotten. On the other hand, their minds seem to be exercised by doubts concerning the person of Christ and His place in Creation, which presuppose much reflection. When we turn from these two letters to the pastoral

Epistles, we seem again to have taken a great step onwards in ecclesiastical organisation as well as in doctrine development.

Considerations of this kind lead many continental, and a few English, scholars to deny the Apostle's authorship of all save four, or, as the case may be, five or six Epistles. The Epistles universally regarded as his—for the modern Dutch school of criticism has not yet gained sufficient authority to make it necessary seriously to reckon with it—are the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians. In favour of I. Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon there is, although not unanimity, a great preponderance of opinion. Much more hesitation is felt regarding II. Thessalonians, Ephesians, and Colossians, although the traditional view of their authorship has still many upholders. Finally, the denial of St. Paul's authorship of I. and II. Timothy and Titus is among critics of the liberal school well-nigh universal, although this opinion is often modified by the admission that the greetings and other personal references may have emanated from the Apostle himself.

The decision of a question such as this will be felt to be a matter of extreme difficulty; nor does it seem to be a question which can ever be finally or decisively answered. Probabilities which to one mind seem so strong as almost to amount to certainty will have far less weight for another. The traditional interval lying between Romans and Ephesians is seven

years. To inquire whether, within such a period, there is time for the appearance among the Christians of Asia Minor of speculations which could occasion such an epistle as that to the Ephesians, or whether such differences of thought and style as distinguish this letter from the Apostle's previous compositions are probable, is to put a question whose answer must obviously depend upon the measure of probability we use. A final answer would scarcely seem to be attainable. We can see no reason why controversy on such a subject should ever close.

Meantime, how will such doubts affect our attitude towards the Epistles? Will Colossians and I. Timothy lose their value because we cannot be certain that they are written by St. Paul? The true answer perhaps is that, while the uncertainty must make a difference to the biographer of St. Paul and the Church historian, its effect upon those who read the Bible for edification will be hardly appreciable. After all, we do not accept any of the Apostle's words merely because they are his; we accept them because we feel them to be true. In some cases, with all our reverence for his authority, we are unable to follow him. "If," says Bishop Lightfoot, "Paul should break out in impatient remonstrance before an unrighteous judge, 'God shall smite thee, thou whitened wall,' then we turn away to a greater than Paul, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not."*

* *Sermons in St. Paul's Cathedral.*

And if the great Apostle was not morally, neither was he intellectually, unerring. His inspiration did not lift him above the limitations of his age and his training. Suppose, then, that criticism should leave us only four or five Epistles as his undoubted work, and should surround the authorship of the rest with uncertainty, the words of these will come, not with his commendation, but with that of the Church of their own and subsequent ages. But in all the Epistles alike we shall have to remember that we are listening to an inspired, but yet not to an infallible, teacher.

I now come to the question itself, What was St. Paul's relation to Christ? what did Christianity mean for him? We shall then be in a position to determine how much of this meaning is still available for us, and how much of it, owing to changes of situation and thought, we can no longer appropriate.

The determining characteristic of the Apostle's knowledge of Christ is revealed in his saying that this was not a knowledge after the flesh (2 Cor. v. 16). He does not indeed directly mean by this that it was not a personal knowledge. When he made use of the expression he intended to point to the supreme importance which for him lay in Christ's sufferings and death. The Messiah in whom he had learned to believe was one who had passed to glory through the depths of humiliation. The knowledge after the flesh which he condemned was the popular conception of an unmistakably glorious and triumphant Messiah. His own knowledge reversed this

conception. Thus the words lead us to the fact which is the key to the Apostle's faith—viz., that he saw his Master's life in the constant light of its closing scene. He knew Jesus as the Crucified and Risen One.

A simple illustration will reveal the significance of this weighty declaration. Let us imagine some remarkable man whose biography, when he dies, has to be written by an intimate personal friend. If the life has been a very eventful one the biographer's great difficulty is to present its various episodes in their true perspective, so that his hero's character may rise distinct and luminous before the reader's mind. But, for the achievement of this, his personal intimacy may be an actual obstacle in his way. He will be more than human if he does not, in spite of his own efforts, give the greatest prominence to those traits in his friend's character which make the strongest appeal to him, and to those scenes in the life he is describing in which he has had a personal share. This would be true even of a trained mind, taught to recognise and guard against its own defects. Much more would such influences tell upon simple men unconscious of the distinction between truth relative and truth absolute, the thing as it is and the thing as it seems to the beholder.

The true key to the life of Christ was at once put into the hands of St. Paul by the circumstances of his own history. The fact which above all others

aroused his anger against the infant Church was, we may feel sure, its belief in a crucified Messiah. The offence which the new faith gave to a Pharisee was the offence of the Cross. The Cross was the annihilation of his country's dearest hope. It was as if God had answered the earnest prayer of Israel by an unspeakable indignity. Thus, we may believe, the Cross had riveted the Apostle's attention before he himself became a Christian. When the great change in his life took place, it kept the central place in all his thoughts of Christ. It did this the more easily because there was not in the Apostle's case, as in the case of the first disciples, anything to disturb the perspective. He contemplated the Cross with prolonged and intense gaze. And at first he saw little in the life of Christ beyond it. Thus to him the central truth of Christianity had been revealed at the very moment when he became a Christian. "The root principle of the ethics of Jesus," says Dr. Sanday (article "Jesus Christ," Hastings' *D. B.*), "is life through death, the death of the lower self with a view to the more assured triumph of the higher. The death and resurrection of Jesus were the visible embodiment of the law of all spiritual being that death is the true road to the higher life."

This visible embodiment forced itself from the outset upon the Apostle's attention. And when, by inquiry, he came to learn what Jesus had done and said in the days of his flesh, the words and acts of

which he heard grouped themselves spontaneously around the central fact which he had first perceived.

Some of the critics of the middle of the last century, in their desire to heighten the contrast between St. Paul and the first disciples, strove to minimise the Apostle's knowledge of his Master's earthly life. They represented him as indifferent to such knowledge, as having conceived and elaborated in his own mind a Christianity which was altogether independent of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. When, however, the Epistles were studied by scholars who were not embarrassed by any previously-formed theory, it was perceived that they bore no evidences of such indifference, but seemed to show that the Apostle had not failed to use such opportunities as offered of acquainting himself with the historical Jesus. Thus, in 1 Corinthians xv. 1-9, he describes the Gospel which he preached by saying: "*I declared unto you, first of all, that which I received,*" indicating clearly that he had learned by inquiry the facts which he proceeds to enumerate. Similarly, he relates the circumstances of the Last Supper with great exactness, in order to prove to the Corinthians how far they were from following the Master's example. Again, in 1 Corinthians vii. 10, 12, 25, he distinguishes between his own commands and those of the Lord—" *It is I and not the Lord, it is not I but the Lord,*" and in actual fact we can find sayings in the Gospels

to support these latter injunctions, but no such sayings upon which to rest the former.

From these facts, as well as from many distinct echoes of the sayings of Jesus which we can catch in the Epistles, we conclude that however original the form which the faith of Christ assumed in the Apostle's mind, this form must have seemed to him quite consistent with the life and the teaching of Jesus. He did not ignore the actual history. The indications all show that he was acquainted with its details. Still, the fact must never be lost sight of that the Christ of the Apostle's knowledge and thoughts was a Heavenly Being, whom in the flesh he had neither seen nor known. The full significance of this fact is not always perceived. Its implications will be more apparent if we follow the course along which the Apostle's thoughts in all probability travelled. When we hear him say that he counted all things but loss for the knowledge of Christ, our tendency is to think of our own knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth—*i.e.*, our familiarity with the Gospel narratives, and to suppose that it was the acquisition of knowledge such as this and of its full meaning which the Apostle made to be his principal aim and object. This was, however, certainly not the pathway he followed. His starting-point was his own experience. What he meant by an increase of the knowledge of Christ was the strengthening and the widening of certain thoughts and impulses of his own. When he

CHRIST IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES. 35

became a Christian, the current of his life had been diverted from its former channel. A new motive had laid hold of him, issuing in new feelings and a new behaviour. From these fruits, which were open and palpable, he passed to the seed which was out of his sight. He traced the results to the only cause of them which he knew. He attributed to Christ a certain character, and described Him in certain language because of certain consequences in his own life which had followed upon his acceptance of Jesus as his lord and master.

We can watch his thoughts following this course when he endeavours to prove to the Corinthians that Christ had indeed sent him to them. He appeals, in evidence of this, not to his history or credentials, but to their experience of the Christian life. "Would you know," he asks them in effect, "whether I have really spoken to you in Christ's name, whether Christ would own me as his minister, then you have not far to go in search of the evidence. It is within you. Prove yourselves, examine your own selves. It is by the fruits of Christ's spirit His presence is revealed. *Know ye not as to your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate*" (2 Corinthians xiii. 3-6).

The principle here implied is one whose importance it would be difficult to exaggerate. It enables us, I believe, to reach the real meaning of much religious phraseology which, in the sense ordinarily

put upon it, has as little refreshment as the speeches of the rhetoricians had for Faust, "Unerquicklich wie der Nebelwind der herbstlich durch die dürrn Blätter säuselt."

The appearance of Christianity was the introduction into the world of a power of startling force. All men saw this power. It was as visible to the antagonists of the new faith as to its disciples. It was forced upon the world's attention by the rapid progress of the infant Church. This progress has been described by a hand able to work wonders with a few strokes of the pen; and is, as he observes, calculated "to excite the deepest interest and amaze-ment in any really philosophical mind."

"Throughout the kingdoms and provinces of Rome," writes Newman, "while all things looked as usual—the sun rising and setting, the seasons continuing, men's passions swaying them as from the beginning, their thoughts set on their worldly business, on their gain or their pleasures, on their ambitious prospects and quarrels; warrior measuring his strength with warrior, politicians plotting and kings banqueting—suddenly this portent came as a snare upon the whole earth. Suddenly men found themselves encompassed with foes as a camp surprised by night. And the nature of this hostile host was still more strange (if possible) than the coming of it. It was not a foreigner who invaded them, not a barbarian from the North, nor a rising of slaves, nor an armament of pirates, but the enemy rose up from

among themselves. The first-born in every house, from the first-born of Pharaoh on the throne to the first-born of the captive in the dungeon, unaccountably found himself enlisted in the ranks of this new power, and estranged from his natural friends." *

The fact which bore this appearance for the outside world would seem not less startling to Christians themselves. They would feel its force, so to speak, from within. They would feel that their own lives had been immeasurably quickened, that they had passed from apathy and despair to hope and joyousness. They would also know that their relations with their fellows had been transformed and elevated. They knew that they had passed from death to life because they loved the brethren.

Following the same course of thought as the Apostle, they argued from these visible, tangible fruits to the only seed from which, as far as they knew, they could have sprung, and they said: "It is Christ who quickens, and raises, and exalts us;" or, as the Apostle would have put it: "This is the power of the resurrection, this is Christ revealing Himself in us."

These considerations give us, I believe, the key to what the primitive Christians meant when they confessed Christ to be God. They made this confession because they felt that Christ had done for them what only God could do. They acknowledged Him to be

* *Par. and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 237. New edition.

God because He was God to them. Whereas, when this confession is presented to us as an article of faith, we, inevitably, in our reflections, follow the reverse order, and instead of beginning from the Christian experience, and arguing from this upwards, we begin from the attributes of the Deity, God's omnipotence, omniscience, etc., and try to reconcile these attributes with our Lord's humanity. So we find ourselves at once in a maze of contradictions. We are following a more primitive, as well as a safer pathway, when we recognise that God is, in His essence, beyond all human description, and that we confess Christ to be God because of the results displayed both in the Church's history and in individual lives that we can trace to His power. It was these results which led the fourth Evangelist to say that the "Eternal Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and that "we have beheld His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

The limitations of human thought have remained identical in all ages. The first Christians had no way of access to the spiritual world which is denied to us. They had not passed through the gates of death, and returned among the living. Nor is there any hint given that the risen Master lifted these mysteries out of the uncertainty in which He left them in the days of his flesh. How, then, did the theories of atonement and justification and election, with which we are so familiar, come to be formu-

lated, and the exact descriptions of future bliss and misery come to be framed? The only answer we can give without appealing to the miraculous is that these theories had their origin in experiences of the living soul. Christians felt that they were already forgiven, reconciled, made just. They tasted already the bliss of heaven, to be deprived of which would be the darkness of hell. Into this state they had been raised by their Christianity. In it they remained as long as they clung to Christ—*i.e.*, in their own language, so long as they walked worthy of their calling; out of it they fell when they denied Christ in their lives.

Of these experiences they gave what would seem to be the only account they could have given when they said: "Christ, touching us by the contact of spirit with spirit, has raised us from death to life. In Christ we are forgiven, reconciled, delivered from the wrath to come. With Him we are seated in heavenly places."

But as years passed, the expressions in which they had embodied these experiences came into the possession of men who were without the key to their meaning, who had not the experience in its original force to illuminate the words. The language became to them a problem and plaything for the speculative intellect. They attempted to give an exact scientific account of a state of exalted spiritual emotion; whereas, we may make bold to say that all these expressions must be meaningless to one who does

not know something at least of the emotions in which they had their birth.

Thus, the student of St. Paul will be unable to escape the conclusion that, to the Apostle, Christ was identical with a power which he felt to be moving within him from the moment he began to lead the Christian life. This power he called the spirit of Christ. He knew of its presence by its fruits. He opposed it to the power of the flesh, as discord is opposed to peace, and love to hatred. But in all his language regarding it he was determined principally by the fruits of life which he saw and knew.

But the revelation of Christ within the mind of St. Paul admits of a closer description. We can examine its contents, and we distinguish three lesser but very important changes involved in that greater change which we call the Apostle's conversion.

His acceptance of the crucified Jesus as the Messiah was, as we have seen, a complete reversal of his former ideas. His thoughts were revolutionised. What had held the foremost place in his mind now held the last place. What had been last was now first. Glory, shame, strength, weakness, success, failure,—all assumed for him a new meaning at the moment of his conversion. Thus he was led at once to that distinction which is so prominent in philosophical writings—the distinction between the apparent and the real. He was taught at once by the Cross, which from the beginning held and riveted his gaze, that apparent shame was real glory, ap-

parent weakness was real strength, apparent failure was real success. His writings show that this distinction took the firmest hold of his mind. Its deep influence upon him may perhaps be obscured by his terminology. Where a modern philosopher would have used the word "apparent," he used the words "after the flesh." To know or to judge after the flesh meant for him to judge after appearances. Contact with Christ after the flesh was a superficial contact with him. Those who had a personal knowledge of Jesus might be united with Him in appearance, while yet they did not share His spirit nor think His thoughts. His own might be the more real union. Thus the revelation of Christ was to him an imperative call to look below the surface, to search for the reality which often lies hidden underneath illusory appearances. To be in Christ was to be in contact with this reality.

The writings of St. Paul gain immensely in vividness and power when this is borne in mind, and it is remembered that the name of Christ was for him synonymous with that truth of things which is so difficult to reach and to hold. If this be forgotten, and the name of Christ in the Epistles be only understood in its ordinary sense, we lose the key to the deep feeling with which this name was charged for the Apostle. It was the symbol of a conviction driven into his mind by his conversion that apparent truth was not real truth, that a man must put away his ordinary notions of greatness, happiness,

success, before he can reach the real end of his being.

Again, the revelation of Christ to Paul was, as we have seen, the disclosure to him of the law of all spiritual being: that death is the road to life. In less formal language he was placed in a new relation to suffering. He was, we may venture to affirm, the first Christian to perceive the significance of the sufferings of Jesus. For him these sufferings were not, as they were to the earliest Christians, an unaccountable disappointment of his fondest hopes. He had never, as they had, seen the life of Jesus without these sufferings. He had never followed Him in the peaceful days when there seemed to be every prospect of His speedy and painless triumph. Thus his Master's sorrows had for him a prominence and a fixity which they did not possess for their minds. He did not look *beyond* them, as they did, towards their speedy effacement by Christ's triumphant return. He looked *at* them, intently and steadily; they were inseparable from his conception of Christ. He knew Christ only as the Crucified One. Thus the revelation of Christ directed his thoughts towards the place which suffering seems to hold in the Divine economy. The labour and sorrow of the world in their various forms were regarded by him as the strife which precedes the victory, as the toil indispensable to the attainment of any worthy result. He embodied these thoughts in the words which have proved so fruitful: "Dying

behold we live." Here again we are in the presence of an experience which is the common property of mankind. We may try to escape from sorrow and labour, or we may bear them with stoical apathy; but when we do either we admit that they are our masters, we acknowledge that they have overcome us. If we can regard them as a part of that travail amidst which the whole creation moves on towards its appointed goal, and in which we must take our share, we have arisen above them, and have reached the position where they have least power to do us harm.

One other conviction destined to take root in the soil of the world and bear much fruit we can see to have been wrapped up in the revelation of Christ within the mind of St. Paul. It made him at once aware of the unity of mankind. When he became sensible of a righteousness independent of the Law, the barrier between Jew and Gentile was at once removed. All mankind became one family with one common head. Well may Jowett, commenting on the verse (Rom. iii. 29, 30)—"*Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith,*" stop to point out how great this thought was in that age and country. "It was," he observes, "a thought which the wisest of men had never before uttered, which even at the present hour we imperfectly realise, which is still

leavening the world, and shall do so until the whole is leavened, and the differences of races, of nations, of castes, of religions, of languages are fully done away."

Of these three weighty truths the name of Christ became to the Apostle the symbol or the equivalent. To grow in the knowledge of Christ was to penetrate deeper into these and other like truths. These truths remain as fundamental as they were in the Apostle's days. When Fichte delivered his popular lectures upon the way to the blessed life, his first step was to make his listeners realise the distinction between the real and the apparent. Readers of Hegel know the weight of meaning he found in the Apostle's words, "Dying, behold we live." And another very distinguished modern philosopher, the founder of Positivism, strove in his own way, as the Apostle had done in his, to make the unity of mankind a fundamental article of faith to his followers.

We need have no fear that the writings in which these deep truths are lit up with all the fire of emotion, and taught, not as philosophical principles, but as religious lessons, will ever lose the place they have so long held in the veneration of mankind.

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST AS SEEN IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

I. HIS PERSON.

Origin, character, and dates of the first three Gospels—Temper in which they should be read—Difference between our conception of the supernatural and that of the writers—Miracles—Fulfillments of prophecy—These Gospels record the impression made by Jesus on the first generation of Christians—Analysis of this impression: (1) the sense of Christ's uniqueness, (2) the peace of Christ, (3) His religious power—The same impression produced in after-ages by the lives of Christians—We are thus able to see how the influence of Christ has been perpetuated, and the relation of Christianity to the historical Jesus.

VALUABLE as the writings of St. Paul are as revelations of the heavenly Christ, the conception we could form from them alone of the earthly life of Jesus would be very dim and meagre. There do exist, however, three narratives written with the express object of preserving His deeds and sayings. The three first Gospels, called synoptic because their contents admit of being presented in a synopsis or common view, are not indeed, like modern biographies, composed only for the purpose of diffusing knowledge about their subject. They are written by believers for believers. The faith of the writers, and their desire to communicate their

faith, are apparent throughout. These three brief records, if we exclude a few incidental allusions in the writings of St. Paul, are our only sources of knowledge of the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

As a result of a whole century's investigation, something approaching unanimity has been reached regarding the nature and origin of the first three Gospels. It is universally recognised that during a period equal, or nearly equal, in length to the life of a generation no record existed either of our Lord's actions or of his sayings. Writing cannot have been a very common accomplishment among the first Christians; and while many still lived who had seen and known Jesus the need for a written record would not perhaps be greatly felt; at least, such a record could be dispensed with. But, as the years passed, these living witnesses became fewer, one by one the fathers fell asleep, and the necessity of a memorial more permanent and trustworthy than that provided by the human memory would with each year become more urgent. The urgency would become still more pressing as the Gospel came to be preached in distant places, to men among whom familiarity with the Old Testament could not be presupposed.

The date of our earliest Gospel—that according to St. Mark—is placed by general consent between 65 and 70 A.D. The fact, however, that it is the earliest Gospel now in existence is, of course, no evidence that it was actually the first written life of

Christ. Some of those narratives mentioned in the introduction to the third Gospel may have been before it. However, we cannot greatly err in affirming that in the seventh decade of the first century written narratives of the life of Christ first began to circulate among Christians.

Two of these seem to have gained special authority, and are particularly mentioned in the earliest surviving fragment of testimony regarding the origin of the Gospels. This consists of two statements of one Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, who lived during the first half of the second century. The date generally assigned to the book in which these two testimonies occur is 140 A.D. The book itself has perished, but the two statements have been preserved by Eusebius as quotations in his Church history.

In one of these Papias says that Matthew composed the Logia, which may be rendered by "Oracles," or "Sacred Records," in Hebrew, and that every man interpreted them as he was able.

For the other testimony, the bishop refers, as his authority, to a certain presbyter, no longer living. This presbyter, he informs us, used to say that Mark attached himself to Peter on his missionary journeys as an interpreter, and that he wrote down as many of this Apostle's narrations of the things done and said by Christ as he remembered. Papias' informant added that Mark himself had not been one of our Lord's personal followers, and that he did not aim at

chronological order in his narrative, but only at a faithful reproduction of everything he had heard.

The precise relation which the two books here referred to bear to our first and second Gospels can only be conjectured. The book pointed to in the first statement cannot be our Gospel according to St. Matthew, for this Gospel bears no signs of being a translation from the Hebrew, but was evidently originally composed in the language in which we possess it. On the other hand, there is no reason why our second Gospel should not be the narrative to which the second quotation refers. We may even pronounce this to be, from the internal evidence of the Gospel itself, a probable conclusion.

The minute comparison of the Gospels with each other has, however, afforded far more trustworthy results than external testimonies can supply. It has been shown that, with the exception of about thirty verses, the whole of the second Gospel may be found embedded in the first and third. This points either to its being an excerpt from these Gospels, or to its being the common authority used by them both. The last of these views has now gained well-nigh universal acceptance, and we may accordingly look upon our second Gospel as the oldest existing record of the life of Christ. Besides those portions of the first and third Gospels which they have in common with the second, they both contain much additional matter. It is estimated that about thirty per cent. of the entire contents of our Matthew and about

twenty-six per cent. of the contents of Luke consist of parallel passages which these Evangelists have in common, but which Mark does not contain. The matter in question consists almost exclusively of discourses or sayings. A previous source from which this common matter has been derived is thus plainly suggested, and the existence of such a source is now universally accepted. This source is generally called the Logia or Oracles, from the words of Papias to which I have referred.

It will, however, be remembered that the document in question is one which has completely perished, and that its nature can only be conjectured from such indications as we may gather from the use made of it by the two Evangelists.

Besides these two sources, a third should be mentioned, to which St. Luke alone had access. Between chapters ix. 51 and xviii. 14 of his Gospel, we find a collection of discourses, parables, and stories, nineteen in number, of which only eight have parallels elsewhere. These are believed by Mr. Wright, the author of the synopsis of the Gospels in Greek already referred to, to have been collected by a Pauline Christian for use in Pauline churches, and are truly said by him to possess the highest value and beauty. The first and third Gospels also contain each a number of fragments peculiar to itself. The most important of these are the opening chapters of these two Gospels, containing the two genealogies of Jesus and the

two narratives of His birth. Finally, critics distinguish from all these groups the explanatory additions, or editorial comments, which they ascribe to the Evangelists themselves. Thus an analysis of the contents of the Gospels yields the following results :—

1. The second Gospel, or a document almost identical with it, would appear to have been used by the first and third Evangelists, and is found almost in its entirety embedded in their narratives.

2. These two Evangelists seem also to have both made use of another source—a document consisting in the main of discourses and sayings, and known, from the quotations by Eusebius from Papias, as the Logia of Matthew.

3. The third Evangelist has introduced into the central part of his Gospels a number of parables and stories, of great tenderness and beauty, from some source to which he alone had access.

4. The first and third Gospels have each a number of fragments, narratives, and sayings peculiar to itself, of which the most conspicuous are the introductory chapters.

5. The Evangelists have each inserted a number of comments and explanations of their own.

This analysis would now find general acceptance. It would of course follow from it that those sections common to two or three Gospels have a stronger attestation than those found only in one.

The object of this and the succeeding chapter is

to exhibit some of the more salient features of the delineation of Christ which these Gospels present. I would approach them with the object of learning from them the impression which Jesus made upon those who attached themselves to Him as His followers. The synoptic Gospels are admittedly the records of these impressions. They do not reveal the consciousness of their Divine subject, or enable us to speak of His motives and the workings of His mind. They show the impress He left upon the mind of the first generation of Christians. To revive this deep impression it is essential that we should stand at the precise point occupied by those who originally felt it; we must, in other words, perform the arduous task of leaving our own intellectual houses and migrating into another, which, before we can move into it, we must first re-build.

It has pleased God that the revelations of heavenly truth which He has made to men should all be given through the medium of a definite moment in history and a definite situation of men and things. The Divine revelations are not written in letters of flame upon the skies, but interwoven with occurrences which soon become matters of ancient history, and also with opinions which quickly become obsolete as the world leaves them behind. Hence, to understand the Divine message we must, so to speak, put back the clock, and bring to life a world that has vanished.

The writers of the Gospels were men of their own age and not ours, interpreting the world as men did in the first century of our era, and not as we do. To say this, does not imply any assumption of superiority on our part. We are not claiming that our age is better than theirs. They may have an advantage over us at many points. We are only asserting that we are separated from them by a deep gulf of thought and sentiment.

All three Evangelists reflect their age generally as men. Two of them also reflect it in particular as Jews. Each of these limitations has its effect upon their representations of our Lord's person and work.

In the first place, they differed widely from ourselves in their thoughts of the supernatural. Our word "miracle" had not for them the meaning it now bears. It could not have this meaning, because the idea of natural sequence was one which had not yet been born. Everything that happens is to our minds a link in a continuous chain. If all the necessary conditions are present, we feel that a given event must happen. If they are not present, we feel that it cannot happen. This idea was not in the mind of any one in the first century. No one thought of a violation of the natural order, because the conception of a natural order had not yet been formed.

The consequence of this was twofold. As nature had no fixed limits, many occurrences were regarded as unaccountable and traced to the intervention of higher powers, which for us would need no such

explanation. Thus there are many indications that the person of Christ, with its union of force and gentleness, had an astonishing effect upon all sensitive to such influences. And there can be little doubt that many of His works of healing are to be explained in this simple way; but these cases are described by the Evangelists in a manner which immediately suggests the miraculous. Attention is fixed exclusively upon the Divine agency. Cures of this kind form no inconsiderable proportion of those wonderful works which are commonly all grouped together under the name of miracles, a word to which we attach a meaning that was then unknown.

The language used of one large group of these works presupposes in particular the conceptions of a bygone age. These are the cures of those said to be possessed by devils. The Evangelists and also the Divine subject of their narratives plainly share the popular beliefs regarding the origin of these forms of disease. "There can be no doubt," observes Dr. Sanday (article "Jesus Christ," Hastings' *D. B.*), "that Jesus Himself shared, broadly speaking, the views of His contemporaries in regard to these cases. His methods of healing went upon the assumption that they were fundamentally what every one, including the patients themselves, supposed them to be;" and this writer truly adds, that such an assumption was in all probability essential to the performance of the cures. The healer would be obliged to accommodate himself to the ideas of

his patient, although we are not to think of such accommodation on our Lord's part as a deliberate assumption of certain beliefs for a particular purpose. What we mean is, that these ideas were part of the equipment of His manhood. In becoming man He accepted these ideas as he accepted a particular language, with its grammar and vocabulary.

On the other hand, if some occurrences then appeared miraculous which have no such character for us, so, too, what we should still pronounce miracles then seemed only extraordinary occurrences. They were only wonders in a world which was full of such. They were not regarded, as we should regard them, as violations of natural order.

It is difficult to measure the degree in which these causes have given the language of the Gospels in our ears a strange and distant sound. We may be sure, as the writer from whom I have just quoted observes, that if the miracles of the first century had been wrought before trained spectators of the nineteenth, the version of them would be quite different. But to suppose this is, as he adds, impossible, because "all God's dealings with men are adapted to the age to which they belong, and cannot be transferred to another age."

I am far from suggesting that all the difficulties which these narratives present to some minds will be removed by these considerations. There are accounts in the Gospels, such as that of the withering of the fig-tree, which seem to us likely to be the

translations into the region of actual fact of parabolic sayings. There are other narratives where the variations would lead us to think that the actual fact had been lost from view. Others, again, might make upon us the impression of being exaggerations, the result of pious awe, of natural occurrences. It is inevitable that readers of the Gospels, with habits of thought like our own, should experience these difficulties, and resort to these conjectures for their solution. But it is surely possible to prevent them from shutting out the real meaning and aim of these books, by making them the chief object of our attention.

But the Christians in whose minds these records were stored before they were committed to writing, and to whom at least two of the Evangelists belonged, not only shared the general beliefs of their age: their minds had been formed on a Jewish pattern, and their hearts were on fire with Jewish hopes. They had become followers of Jesus and believers in His messiahship, we may feel sure, without having precisely adjusted their new convictions to their traditional beliefs. Now, when the Master was gone, the very first task of pious reflection was the identification of Him as the Messiah foretold by prophets and psalmists.

That the life of Jesus had its adumbrations in the writings of the Jewish prophets is plain to every reader of the Old Testament. In particular, His life was anticipated, even in many of its striking

details, in that central Messianic vision which forms Isaiah liii. But we no longer think of these majestic correspondences as definite predictions, followed by equally definite fulfilments. We have learned to see in them a much nobler meaning. The actual life corresponds to the prophetic words because both are expressions of the same Divine purpose, which has been flowing like some ocean current through the ages, and manifesting its presence from time to time in the words and the lives of men. The writer of Isaiah liii. saw this purpose, the Divine purpose of the redemption of man through vicarious suffering, more plainly than any other Jewish prophet or poet; but others perceived it also, although not with the same distinctness. Hence, there are many real fulfilments of Old Testament prophecy in the life of Christ. However, besides these correspondences based upon an essential connection, the Christians of the first generation sought and found many others, which we, with our historical sense and our better philological knowledge, find it impossible to accept. Some of them appear to us fanciful, devoid of historical or linguistic support. When we consult the actual passages in the Old Testament which supplied the quotations: "Out of Egypt did I call my Son," "He shall be called a Nazarene," "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, behold thy King cometh unto the meek, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass," we can find no suggestion in them of the incidents in the Gospel history with which

they are connected by the first Evangelist. The tendency to find such parallels is, we recognise, as much a part of the writer's environment as his language or his nationality.

These are some of the reasons which urge upon us a greater modesty and self-distrust, in handling the Gospels, than have hitherto always been customary. There are two separate considerations which will often forbid us to speak with positiveness. We may try to carry ourselves back in imagination across the intervening centuries, but the attempt can only be partially successful. We cannot divest ourselves of our own habits of thought, and put on those of other men. We cannot look at the world with the eyes of the Evangelists. In many a narrative we shall feel that the actual fact is beyond perfect recovery; upon many a saying we shall abstain from placing an interpretation which would exclude other meanings. On the other hand, although we are convinced that natural laws know of no exceptions, we are aware that it is only over a few of these laws our knowledge extends. We shrink with greater and greater reluctance from setting limits to the possible. In particular, it may well be that our knowledge of the relations of matter and spirit, and their mutual influence, may be destined to receive great and surprising additions.

The self-distrust inspired by these considerations may narrow the dimensions of the divine portrait, but the gain will outweigh the loss. We shall be

shielded from the tendency to give the authority of Christ to the fancies of our own minds ; and, if the image we form of Him be narrower, it will be more stable, and will still, I believe, retain all its religious power.

To this portrait, or to some of its essential features, I now turn. The foregoing considerations, which are forced upon us by the last century's study of the New Testament, all issue in one general conclusion. They compel us to recognise the relativity of the picture we have now to consider. It presents to us the figure of Jesus as it impressed itself upon the first generation of Christians ; we see Him as He seemed to them to be. Our task is accordingly a simple one, or at least admits of being expressed in simple terms. We have to place ourselves among those who followed Jesus and ask (1) how they regarded Him, what conception they formed of His person, and (2) what new view of life they learned from Him as a teacher. This definition of our task implies that we know of Him only what was known to the first generation of Christians. About the limits of this knowledge there is happily complete unanimity of opinion among scholars.

"The place," observes Dr. Sanday, "which the Virgin-birth occupies in Ignatius and in the Creed seems to show that it cannot have been much later than the middle of the century before the knowledge of it made its way to the headquarters of Chris-

tianity. But before some such date as that there is no reason to think that it was generally known. It was no part of our Lord's own teaching. The neighbours among whom His early life was passed, the changing crowds who witnessed His miracles or gathered round Him to hear Him, had never had it proclaimed to them. Jesus, son of Joseph, the prophet of Nazareth, was the name by which He was known. . . . The Gospels simply and naturally reflect this language. We may well believe that the language was shared, as the ignorance which caused it was shared, by the Twelve themselves" (art. "Jesus Christ").

If, then, we try to determine the first and most general impression which the person of Jesus made upon His followers, we have no great difficulty in reaching it. They were deeply penetrated by the sense of His unlikeness to ordinary men. This feeling is apparent on every page of the synoptic Gospels. It excites among the disciples sometimes astonishment, sometimes self-surrender, sometimes terror. The narrative reveals to us at every step the influence of an unique personality. The sense thus created was greatly strengthened by the death of Jesus and the experiences which followed it. The disciples then received the assurance that their Master still retained in the spiritual world the place He had occupied within their earthly experience. How this assurance first reached them, and grew stronger as the days passed, we do not know, nor

shall we ever know. We are only made aware of their deep confidence that God had not left the soul of His Beloved in the nether-world nor suffered His holy one to see corruption.*

If we take a further step, keeping the same firm hold upon our imaginations, and resisting the tendency to hide our ignorance by resorting to familiar language, and endeavour to analyse this uniqueness, we shall find the most marked characteristic of Jesus to be a certain collectedness, or composure, or serenity of mind under the utmost stress of circumstance. We are made aware of this trait in all the various situations into which the narrative brings us. We feel throughout that we are in the company of one who is equal to the many demands which life makes upon him, and who is in possession of a peace which nothing can disturb. This collectedness was distinct both from apathy and from stoical fortitude. It co-existed with wide sympathies and with a very strenuous life. It was also marked by an unfailing sweetness of disposition. It finds at once an expression and an explanation in those sayings which reveal the intimate union of Christ with the Father. The communication of it to those who would learn of Him was also the central offer of Jesus: "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

One more step we may take. The followers of Jesus did not feel that they were in the company of

* See Appendix, Note B, "The Resurrection."

one who had climbed by an arduous progress to a great height of virtue, and whom they could with difficulty follow. The yoke of Jesus was easy and His burden was light. They felt that the Divine Goodness was advancing to meet them and was coming to their aid. They felt, in their own language, that God had visited His people.

This was especially the feeling of those upon whom the world was frowning, or who were in any anguish of mind caused by remorse, or grief, or the failure to find the right way; for the personality of Jesus was distinguished not more by its own deep serenity than by its tenderness towards lives tossed by passion, or broken by the heavy weight of suffering. By such He was especially welcomed as the Saviour and Redeemer. To seek and to save such He said that He had come.

These direct experiences of the uniqueness of Jesus, of His peace, and of His power to heal and to save, are, I believe, the real foundations of the Christian doctrine regarding His person and His work. These impressions were the immediate effect of His personality upon the minds of His followers, and find expression at every stage of the Gospel narrative. When, however, He had passed from the earth, and His gospel came to be preached to men with habits of abstract reasoning, these experiences were embodied in formulas which strove, above all things, after accuracy or definition. The intimate union with the Father which Jesus

had repeatedly revealed, and which His followers felt to belong to Him, was analysed in a series of intellectual propositions. His power to raise up the despairing, to redeem sinners, and to bring back among the living those who were dead, was accounted for and vindicated at the bar of reason. The formulas thus created became in their turn the objects of controversy, and what had been, in the first instance, an experience of the awe-struck soul, realising the mysterious touch of the Divine, came to bear the aspect of an intellectual problem.

We should not, however, fail to recognise the necessity of this intellectual work, although for us it has in a great degree lost its importance. If it had not been imperatively called for, it would not have absorbed so much human energy. The consideration, however, of its origin shows us that it is not to it we must resort, if we would feel the religious power of Christ. It did not please God, according to the well-known saying, to save His people by appealing to their reasoning faculties; or, as a writer of our own,—in whose religious books there is much truth mingled with a great deal that has proved to be superficial,—Matthew Arnold, exclaims: “What a consolation to us, . . . if we can find that for this great concern of religion, at any rate, abstruse reasoning does not seem to be the appointed help, and that as good, or better a help—for, indeed, there can hardly, to judge by the present state of things, be

a worse—may be something which is in an ordinary man's power!"

What, then, is this something? Some of the answers to this question long current have become incredible. If a man tells us that he does not feel the power of Christ, that much of the language of Scripture has become meaningless to him, that he can give no significance to such words as "atonement" or "salvation" or "eternal life," we cannot urge him, as evangelical theology did, to pray that God may work in him an instantaneous change. This is precisely what he cannot do. He does not believe in the possibility of such a change. He knows that character is continuous. He has not faith to pray. Nor can he accept the advice of Roman or Anglican Christianity, which bids him seek the presence of Christ in His sacraments, for the absence of faith is here also an effectual barrier in his way. To find His presence he is told he must have faith, and this, he sadly feels, is what he does not possess.

There would seem to be only two ways by which he can rekindle the meaning of these vital words, and still honestly call himself a Christian, although putting upon the word the interpretation of his own age.

The power of Christ is, in some measure at least, felt by every reverent reader of the Gospels. Let any man read these narratives, endeavouring to put back the clock of time, and transport himself into the past,

as he would and must do if he were reading any other ancient book, and he will feel that the Unseen Goodness is drawing near to him in the figure presented to his view. That the Gospels have always exercised, and do still exercise this influence, history bears witness. It is here, and not in the miraculous intervention of God, nor in abstract reasoning, for which the great majority of men have no aptitude, that we find the abiding source of Christian influence, the perpetual revelation of the power of Christ.

But if this source should for any reason fail, another still remains. We have the testimony of history that the life of Christ, so to speak, repeated itself in the lives of His followers, and that it gave birth to a new type of character. This character has perpetuated itself through the Christian centuries. This was the thought in the Apostle's mind when he designated the Church as the Body of Christ. It was the living manifestation of Christ's spirit, the continuance of His influence.

This character will come before us in greater detail in the following chapter. Meantime, we are contemplating the position of one who finds the traditional affirmations regarding the person of Christ incredible or unintelligible. How is he to fill these repellant propositions with intelligible meaning?

Let him recognise that the origin of all these propositions is to be found in the impression made

by Jesus upon those who associated with Him, and in their experiences as they lived the Christian life. They described Him in the language with which we are familiar by reason of the influence He had actually exercised upon them, and the happiness to which He had led them.

This influence we can feel in the pages of the Gospels, or perhaps more strongly still in the lives in which we recognise the Christian spirit. It is only by making actual trial of the Christian character and the Christian life that the meaning of these affirmations can be learned. In as far as they have any permanent value, they are the records of experiences of the soul. It is in the renewal of these the only key to their significance is to be found.*

* This would seem to be the meaning of that suggestive, but most arrogant of writers, Coventry Patmore, in his essay, "Christianity an Experimental Science":—"Christianity is an experimental science, and the best answer to one who questions, If it be true? is, Try it." (*Religio Poeta.*)

CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

II. HIS TEACHING.

In what sense was Jesus a teacher?—Omissions in His teaching—Its presuppositions of Jewish faith and Roman law—Its Messianic form—Nature of the Messianic hope—Shape given to it by the popular imagination—Its interpretation and fulfilment by Jesus—The Kingdom of Heaven—Its nature and final destiny—Permanent and universal elements of the teaching of Jesus—His mind was moved especially by three prevalent misconceptions: (1) confusion between the politics of religion and religion itself, (2) pursuit of illusory goods, (3) neglect of the sentiment of pity—The Christian character embodied in the life of its author.

THE person of Jesus, we cannot doubt, was a more potent vehicle of His teaching than His words. Without deliberate effort, He stamped his own likeness upon his disciples. That new creation, the Christian character, had its origin in His personality. He thus occupies an unique place in the history of mankind. Even if parallels for all his sayings should be found in the utterances of Jewish or Gentile wisdom, this effect of His personality would still remain. He would still stand apart among men by reason of this new creation. Seen under one aspect, Christianity appears rooted in the past, born at the

appointed time, conditioned, like all other phenomena, by its antecedents. But its origin is not revealed until we add to the circumstances which called for it and favoured it, the influence, admitting of no further explanation, of the unique personality of its Founder.

But, besides thus teaching indirectly, Jesus taught expressly. A large part of his public ministry was devoted to teaching. We repeatedly hear of Him opening His mouth and teaching, sometimes the disciples privately, and more often the multitudes who gathered round Him.

A close resemblance has been found between His method and that of Socrates. Both teachers were in the habit of asking questions, and stimulating their listeners to measure the limits of their knowledge and their ignorance. We may feel sure that our Lord's teaching would have this effect in a very high degree, and thus would serve to elicit those true notions and sentiments which are to be found in the minds of all men, but which are often choked and stifled before they are born, and so bring no fruit to perfection. But Jesus was also a teacher in another sense than this. He not only elicited knowledge, He also imparted it. He communicated new truth to those who had ears to hear. Yet, when we call Him, as He was so often called by His contemporaries, a teacher, the title has for us some misleading associations against which it is necessary to be on our guard. He did not teach with the object of com-

municating knowledge. In His case, the communication of knowledge was only subsidiary to an end beyond itself. He was one who in His own person lived and moved in God; and His object was to impart this consciousness to His listeners, and bring them into this, His own, relationship. With this purpose He taught. Again, He did not teach as a philosopher. He allowed the need of the hour to call forth the teaching. He followed the leading of accidental circumstance rather than of logical order or consecutive method. It is possible for us, with all His recorded sayings before us, to disengage from them some general truths to which they all seem to point. But the mould we thus create is one of our own fashioning. And there is, as we shall see, serious divergence of view among interpreters equally competent, as to the truths to which the central place should be given.

With these qualifications, we may describe Jesus as a teacher, and proceed to ask what the substance of His teaching was. What was the new truth he communicated to the world? Before we are in a position to answer this question some obstacles must first be removed. Our attention is arrested by a characteristic of the teaching of Christ which is almost as noticeable as its contents—its omissions. What it leaves unsaid is almost as significant as what it says. These omissions become most easily intelligible in the light of a fact already alluded to—the fact that the whole revelation of Christ is attached to a definite

moment in history, a definite position of the ever-shifting kaleidoscope of the world. It appears as a link in a chain. It presupposes a certain environment. It addresses itself to Jews, and to Jews who were living under the government of Rome.

These two facts indicate the two great presuppositions of the teaching of Christ. It presupposes the Jewish faith. Hence, it contains no definitions on many points on which we should desire more precise information. Thus it gives no definition or explanation of the great name of God. The reality which this name expresses has never ceased to occupy the human mind, and in this long course of thought, meanings the most various have been put upon it. It is sometimes the weightiest, and sometimes the lightest, of terms. Its sense varies with him who uses it. Jesus employs the name without any explanation, as prophets and psalmists had employed it before Him. He presupposes in his listeners the conceptions of Jews.

Again, He presupposed, as a part of Jewish faith, the sanctity of the Mosaic law. All the Evangelists alike represent Him as reverencing its precepts. Matthew reports Him as declaring emphatically that he had not come to destroy but to fulfil it. Its observance was only condemned by Him when the weightier claims of justice and mercy were sacrificed to it. It was not loyal obedience to the Law which aroused His anger, but the making of it of none effect by tradition, the putting of ceremonial before moral

obedience. It has been truly pointed out that the great controversy of the apostolic age regarding the obligation of the Law could not have arisen had His teaching in this matter been quite free from ambiguity. Had He expressed himself decisively either on the one side or the other, the conflict which filled St. Paul's life would not have taken place. It was because Jesus revered the Law that the original apostles hesitated about its relaxation. It was because His teaching implied that the ceremonial part of it was superfluous, if only the moral part could be preserved and completed, that St. Paul fought and won his good fight.

Once more, our Lord lived and died in a province of the Roman Empire. Around Him was the social order, established after centuries of political experience, by a race born to rule. This established order He assumes in His teaching. He does not direct any part of His attention towards it. It lies beneath His feet like the ground we walk on. He does not contemplate its alteration. He does not inquire whether the Government under which He lives is legitimate or illegitimate. Hence the modern demand upon Christianity that it shall help towards a reconstruction of society and a solution of the pressing problems of poverty, finds, on a superficial view at least, little satisfaction in the Gospels. We may believe that if Christians were to carry with them the mind of Christ in their various social relations, if they were to consider themselves stewards of their wealth,

if they were to treat their dependants as brethren, these crying problems would cease to press. But they receive no direct attention in the Gospels.

"Jesus," truly says Dr. Harnack, "unfolded no social programme with the object of remedying and removing poverty and distress: he gave no specific directions and precepts for this purpose. He did not entangle himself in the economic relations of his time. Had he done so, had he given laws, which would have been ever so beneficent for Palestine, what would have been gained thereby? They would have been useful to-day, and antiquated to-morrow, and would have burdened and confused the Gospel."*

If we now pass from the omissions of the teaching of Christ to its actual contents, we mark a characteristic which gives it to our ears somewhat of a remote and foreign sound. Jesus taught, not as a detached and independent teacher, as the prophets before Him had been, but as one whose life was following a pre-determined course, who was fulfilling the central religious hope of Israel. We saw that His followers strove to find in the Old Testament an anticipation of every detail of His life. But it is certain that they were encouraged to look for such resemblances by His own example. When the disciples of John came to ask Him whether He was indeed the Messiah, His reply was to recall the traits of the Messianic time foreshadowed in the Old

* *Wesen des Christenthums*, p. 62.

Testament and to point to their presence accompanying His own ministry. "*The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them.*" And then He added, as if, notwithstanding these traits, misgivings were still likely to remain, "*Blessed is he whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me*" (Matt. xi. 5-6). As a very large part of the teaching of Jesus bears directly or indirectly upon this subject, it is essential we should understand what the popular Messianic hope was, and the new meaning given to it by Jesus.

The Messianic hope of the Jews seems to have been originally a part of the larger expectation of a perfect state, a time when the nation would be altogether righteous, and would dwell in undisturbed security under the Divine protection. At first, this wider hope does not seem to have contained within it any expectation of an ideal human king. The people's request to Samuel for a king was rebuked by the prophet as an infidelity against the nation's Divine ruler. Jehovah himself was the nation's true king. But the reign of David and his brilliant successor left imperishable traditions, and in the great prophets of the eighth century B.C., most of whom lived in the southern kingdom and amidst Davidic traditions, we often meet with anticipations of an ideal ruler to arise of the house and lineage of David.

My limits do not permit me to trace the history of

this hope of the revival of the Davidic line after this line had ended amidst shame and disaster. It must suffice to say that, at the time of the birth of Christ, and for at least half a century previously, it was universally accepted that the ideal king was to be of the house and lineage of David. It should also be borne in mind that, during the century and a half preceding the Christian era, Messianic hopes had been greatly stimulated by the appearance in different parts of the Jewish world of a number of apocalyptic books containing detailed descriptions of the last days. The differences in the Messianic conceptions of these various books, and the process of development to which they bear witness, prove that this hope, among our Lord's contemporaries, assumed different forms according to the mind that held it. There was no stereotyped or authoritative picture of the ideal king. The hope had greater vagueness than we are in the habit of supposing, as we may see from the popular hesitation regarding Christ's own Messianic claims.

But we may believe that the Messiah's relationship to God was generally, if not universally, pictured in a very external and mechanical fashion. He was conceived as one charged by God, so to speak, with a political mission: related to his Divine Master as a lieutenant is related to the general whose orders he executes. The very insistence upon the Davidic lineage of the Messiah is to our minds an evidence of this mechanical connection.

Looking closely at all the indications, we are led to the conclusion that our Lord strove to dislodge these material and external conceptions from the popular mind and to put spiritual ones in their stead. Where His contemporaries thought of a political or military emissary of the Most High, He substituted the conception of a Son of God united to His Father by intimate love and unswerving obedience. Although all our authorities, St. Paul as well as the synoptic Evangelists, agree upon His Davidic descent, we do not learn that it seemed of great importance to Himself. On the one occasion on which we find Him making direct allusion to it, He expressly subordinates it to the Divine Sonship of the Messiah. He asks concerning the Messiah: "*David himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he his son?*" The answer he would have accepted would appear to be this: "The Messiah by His closer nearness to the Most High is far above David, as David himself recognised when he called Him Lord; none the less he may be called David's Son inasmuch as it has seemed good to God that He should be born of David's family." He thus gave a secondary place to that fleshly descent from David which for His contemporaries possessed paramount importance, inasmuch as it was the pledge of the restoration of the Davidic throne.*

The same transformation of the existing Messianic beliefs is still more plainly revealed by the title,

* Cf. Wendt: *Die Lehre Jesu*, pp. 424-426, German edition.

which was the most usual self-designation of Jesus—the Son of Man. A voluminous literature has sprung up around this designation. There is, however, practical unanimity regarding its principal implication. It is recognised that Jesus, in adopting it, wished to draw attention to His humanity. He wished to declare that, although the Son of God and the King of Israel, He yet was Man, and as Man the prey of sin and death. It was the mental struggle needed before these two characters could be reconciled which is brought before us in the narrative of the Temptation.

We are precluded by reverence, as well as by the impossibility of the task, from any attempt to analyse the Messianic consciousness of Jesus. We shrink for both reasons from every endeavour to read the workings of His mind. There are indications that His baptism at the hands of John formed a marked epoch in His spiritual history. The voice out of the heavens, "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,*" would suggest that He received some emphatic assurance at that moment of His fitness for the heavy burden He was about to lay upon Himself. Still, our narratives all point to the conclusion that our Lord's spiritual growth was an even and continuous development, marked by no sudden illumination or abrupt accession of strength, such as many early heresies read into this narrative of the Baptism. But, although we may not enter into the mind of Jesus, we can mark His procedure.

The Gospels leave us in no doubt that He did not at once assume the Messianic character, but rather shrank, in the earlier stages of His ministry, from any public recognition as the long-expected King.

There are repeated indications in the second Gospel of His unwillingness to accept publicly the Messianic name. What does this reluctance mean? Does it imply that His assurance of Messianic power grew as His ministry proceeded, and that confidence gradually took the place of hesitation? We can only answer that there are no traces of such growth, and that we have no need to resort to such an explanation, inasmuch as a much simpler one is near. We may, with great probability, suppose that Jesus was unwilling to be known as the Messiah until He had made the meaning clear which He attached to the title. Nothing but confusion and disappointment could have come of any premature recognition. Before He assumed the title of Messiah He made known, by His character and teaching, the new sense He was putting upon the name. He familiarised His listeners with the ethical and spiritual relationship with God which He substituted for the political one of the popular fancy. He taught them not to be dismayed by His human defencelessness. The old conceptions, however, plainly lingered in the minds of His followers, even of the Twelve, to the end. The Galileans who welcomed Him on His last approach to Jerusalem were still influenced by the popular Messianic hopes; and

it is plain that the tragic ending came as a surprise to the Apostles. Indeed, the visions of a material Messianic kingdom long survived the Crucifixion, and may be traced even in the Millenarianism of the second century.

In the course of His Messianic teaching Jesus made repeated use of an expression to which the Messianic hope had given rise, and which has thus become one of the characteristic terms of the Gospel. This is the phrase, "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Heaven." Examining this central expression, we should beware of ascribing our own abstract ideas to the simple men among whom the Gospel had its origin. The phrase is sometimes defined in terms which can only be understood by a considerable intellectual effort. The words, however, obviously presented no difficulty to those who first heard them. They were not explained by Jesus, because they needed no explanation. There can be little doubt that they conveyed to them the idea of the Messianic kingdom, the perfect earthly state or polity, anticipated by prophets and psalmists. This current conception Jesus took, according to His custom, and made it the vehicle of His own teaching. A very large number of His words aim at setting forth the nature of this kingdom of Heaven.

In these sayings there are two important points, connected, indeed, but yet separable, on which positive statements do not seem to be permissible

Are we to think of this kingdom as a moral order which Jesus knew that He had established among men, and to whose wide extension in the future He looked forward with perfect confidence? Or are we to think of it as a future consummation which He represented as close at hand, a new era of peace and righteousness shortly to dawn? Both conceptions may be supported by sayings in the Gospels as well as by the course of the Church's subsequent history. From the Apostolic age onwards we find, as Dr. Harnack observes, two different views taken of the purpose of Christ's coming, and of the nature of salvation. Christ is represented, on the one hand, as announcing a future blessedness, and, on the other, as assuring a present one. The one view regards Christianity as principally a hope, the other looks upon it as a realisation or an attainment. These two conceptions are not, of course, mutually exclusive. In the one case, attention is fixed upon the ultimate goal, and everything else is regarded as a movement towards it; in the other, the results already achieved by Christ, the inner change effected by Him, assume primary importance, and what lies beyond is treated as an inevitable, and consequently negligible, consequence. These two views may still be seen colouring the current presentations of Christianity, and giving it the character either of an apocalyptic hope or of a practical philosophy.* Both conceptions

* Cf. Harnack's *Dogmen Geschichte*, vol. i. p. 124.

are sanctioned by the language of the Gospels. If there are sayings of Christ in which the kingdom of Heaven wears an apocalyptic aspect, where the call is rather upon hope, or upon patient waiting, than upon action, there are others in which the long continuance of present conditions is plainly indicated, and where the attention is fixed rather upon the opportunities and needs of the present than upon the possibilities of the future.

The other point on which we are left in uncertainty touches the future of the kingdom, and the ultimate issue of Christ's work upon earth. In some sayings we hear of a great world catastrophe, accompanied by the personal advent of Jesus, by which the end of His earthly work is reached, and the hopes of His followers finally satisfied. Such was the universal expectation, as we know, of the first generation of Christians, the anticipation of St. Paul no less than of the author of the Apocalypse. Elsewhere, however, we meet with a conception with which the foregoing one can with difficulty be reconciled. Here the final consummation is wrought out and the issue reached by the operation of spiritual processes. The soul of the Christian, created anew, re-creates the world. The kingdom of God is not established by the action of an external force upon the soul, but by the action of a force within the soul acting upon the world.

It may be truly urged that the greater congruity of this last conception with our own ideas is no

evidence of its truth. The only question is, what was the predominant thought in the mind of the Divine Speaker? This it is the business of criticism to discover, whether the meaning be to us welcome or unwelcome. But while we admit this, we must be on our guard against the tendency to create symmetry and uniformity where they do not exist. We can only mark in our records the presence of the two antagonistic conceptions, and admit our inability to reconcile them.

We must say that our authorities do not permit us to speak positively upon Christ's presentation of the last things—His eschatological teaching, as it is called. We cannot separate His own meaning from the colouring given to it by those in whose minds it was first stored.

"In regard to eschatology," says Harnack, "no one can say in detail how much proceeds from Christ and how much from His disciples. . . . What is most important, and at the same time certain, is that Jesus makes the definite destiny of the individual to depend upon his faith, his humility, and his love."* And an eminent English scholar acknowledges that "to determine the form of Jesus' teaching concerning His advent and the consummation is not possible in the present state of our sources;" and that "it is almost as difficult to be sure of the exact words of Jesus regarding 'the Day of Judgment,' as to de-

* *Dogmen Geschichte*, vol. i. p. 65.

termine what He said concerning His second Advent."*

It will be shown in the next chapter that the New Testament does not leave us in this vague uncertainty. It presents to us a view of the last things as distinguished by its definiteness as by its spiritual sublimity. In the fourth Gospel the judgment by which the friends of Jesus are separated from His enemies is already in process of completion in the choice which each man makes between good and evil. The Advent is there represented as one which has already taken place within the souls of all who love Jesus and keep His sayings. The eternal life belongs to them as a present possession; the bliss of the perfect state is already theirs. This will appear on an examination of the Gospel of St. John. Meantime, we may mark the permanent and universal elements of the teaching of Jesus as it is presented in the synoptic Gospels.

Like all other religious teachers, He was deeply moved by the contrast between what might be and what actually was. The Kingdom of Heaven, however we interpret it, was the opposite of the kingdoms of this world. It was opposed to them as the ideal is opposed to the actual, the complete to the imperfect. Many of the sayings in which it is described receive their complexion from this contrast. The greatness of the followers of Jesus is the opposite of earthly greatness. The sovereignty of

* Stevens's *Theology of the New Testament*.

Jesus has none of the marks of earthly sovereignty; and it has been well pointed out* that the Beatitudes are best understood when they are considered in the light of the worldly characteristics to which they are opposed. It is in these sayings as if Jesus had wished to urge His followers to avoid what was generally coveted, and to seek what was generally despised. Thus a large part of His teaching was plainly prompted by a desire to recall men from that false relationship to the facts of life in which He found them. This is only an expansion of His central invitation to the weary and the heavy laden: "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." The great foe of rest is a disregard or a misinterpretation of the facts of experience.

Three great misconceptions seem to have especially moved the mind of Christ. Among the most powerful section of His people He found religious institutions usurping the place of those moral interests which they were intended to protect. The institutional aspect of religion was the one most prominent in their minds. In their zeal for the preservation of the institution they forgot the object of its existence. They confounded the politics of religion with religion itself. This was the error which, as it would seem, was the first to attract His notice and to arouse His indignation. It was this which He rebuked in the answer to the question about the payment of tribute to Cæsar. What is

* By Bishop Gore.

implied in this much-discussed answer may be thus expressed: "Religion has its political aspects. These do demand consideration. But they have not the supreme importance which you by your question give them. If religion looks towards Cæsar, it looks also towards God. This last aspect you are forgetting; of this you ought to think."

The misapprehension which, from the number of sayings it called forth, would appear to have held the second place in His pity was the pursuit of illusory goods. The world, then as now, strove to take entire possession of the heart. The real issues of life were obscured by the apparent ones. The influence of surrounding things was exaggerated; the care and cultivation of the spirit were neglected. This was the misinterpretation, ever old and ever new, which called forth many of the great sayings and paradoxes of Christianity: its insistence upon the supreme value of the soul; its condemnation of riches; its disclosure of treasures stored up in Heaven for those that loved and feared God; its revelation of an eternal life. The whole teaching of Jesus on this subject was summed up in the great command in which He bade His followers seek first the Kingdom of God, and promised them that all other things would be added unto them.

Finally, His eye rested upon those for whom His own filial relationship with God seemed to be almost, or altogether, an impossibility. They were shut out from it either by exceptional suffering or by their

own failure to curb their passions, or by the unjust condemnation of society. The attitude which Jesus adopted towards these, and which he enjoined upon His followers, was one, as far as we can tell, quite new. The great Teacher appealed to a sentiment which had been left almost wholly untouched by the great moralists of antiquity—the sentiment of pity. “The conspicuous and commanding use,” observes that very suggestive writer, J. B. Mozley, “which Christianity has made of the principle of compassion, is a characteristic of it which must strike everybody.” And he may well say that “one is struck with the astonishing stupidity of paganism in throwing away such an instrument of gratification of the most deep, insinuating, and penetrating kind; . . . winding itself into the inner soul.” That it did throw it away seems to be unquestionable. Jesus created by word and example that most winning of traits, Christian pity—the feeling which hears in any great suffering a call to help, which responds to the appeal of weakness, and opens the ear amidst the music of nature to the discord of sin and suffering.

The Christian character thus owed, in a sense, its origin to the recoil from existing facts and errors. The Kingdom of Heaven in some of its most distinctive features stood opposed to the kingdoms of this world. Hence, it could not in its complete form be described as present; at best, it was only in process of realisation.

In contrast with those to whom religion presented

itself as an institution, embodied in traditions, expressed in customs and observances, the followers of Jesus were bidden to look to its roots within the soul. They were commanded to shun publicity, to set supreme value upon purity of heart and singleness of motive. Unlike those who allowed themselves to be entangled in the meshes of outward things, they were bidden to lay up treasures in heaven; and they were urged to look upon pain with their Master's pitying eyes, and to endeavour like Him to raise up the fallen and to redeem the lost.

So a character of great originality was created, which was as attractive as it was new. This character received a marvellous embodiment, and found expression in a most moving symbol when its creator, illustrating His own words, and carrying His ministry to the farthest point of sacrifice, found His life in seeming to lose it. So the various elements which together constitute the Christian character—its inwardness, its fear of worldly contamination, its active pity, were all blended together and expressed in the Christian exclamation: "Dying, behold we live." "If we die with Christ, we shall also share His newness of life."

To possess the character thus created was, in the Apostle's language, to be a new creature in Christ Jesus. It was to have the mind of Christ and the life eternal. The character reproduced and perpetrated itself through the centuries, and has long

since become one of the permanent possessions of mankind. It may be, of course, and no doubt is shared by many who think but little of its origin. Jesus Himself plainly anticipated such a result, and foresaw that His Spirit might dwell in some who knew not whence the life within them had come, that He would be the unowned Master of many disciples.

As for the words in which this Divine character was first outlined, they have attained, in the noble language of Milton, to a life beyond their own life ; so that, if we could even think of them perishing, they would still live in the institutions and laws and philosophies they have created : " For books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progenie they are : nay, they do preserve, as in a violl, the purest efficiencie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them."*

* *Areopagitica.*

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST AS SEEN IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

Present position of the controversy upon the authorship and character of the fourth Gospel—General view of its contents—The three main sections of the Gospel: (1) the prologue (i. 1-18), Christ revealed as the Incarnate Logos; (2) self-revelation of Jesus to the world (i. 19-xii. 50); (3) His self-revelation to the disciples (xiii. 1-xvii. 26)—Symbolism of the Gospel—Parabolic character of the miracles—Spiritual interpretation given to the beliefs of the Church: the Kingdom of Heaven; the final Judgment; the second Advent; the life eternal—Difficulty of this teaching—The Gospel contrasted with the Epistles of St. Paul.

THE presentation of Christ now to be considered differs markedly from those we have hitherto examined. Into every portrait the painter, indeed, introduces something of his own; his own character may be seen blending, to some extent, with the character of his subject. This is the case both in St. Paul's conception of Christ and also in the delineation of Him to be found in the synoptic Gospels. In both cases the characteristics of the beholder may be observed influencing the impression he forms and the description he gives.

In none of these records, however, does the chronicler force himself upon our notice so

markedly as he does in the fourth Gospel. In this fact, indeed, lies the problem of this strange book. The fundamental question it raises is the question, how far its portrait of Christ is an ideal portrait, and how far it is borne out by the facts of history?

The fourth Gospel has been, perhaps beyond the other books of the Bible, the minister of guidance and consolation to the perplexed and the sorrowful. It has performed this office, we may believe, chiefly by reason of the power felt to reside in the discourses of Jesus which it records. These discourses have been read for many centuries without arousing in the mind of any reader the suspicion that they were unworthy of the Divine Speaker.

It might suffice for our present purpose to proceed at once to examine the likeness of Christ here presented, without inquiring when or by whom it was drawn. This might seem, however, an evasion of a recognised difficulty, for it is well known that the apostolic origin of the fourth Gospel has in recent years been widely and vehemently questioned. I shall accordingly, before approaching the contents of the book, try to indicate the position which the controversy regarding its origin would now appear to have reached.

The year 1847, when Baur's famous book on the canonical Gospels appeared, may be regarded as marking the extreme point reached by criticism in its departure from traditional views. The fourth

Gospel formed, as we have seen, one of the principal supports of the Tübingen hypothesis. It was pronounced by Baur to be the birth of a time when the early antithesis between Jewish and Pauline Christianity had been overcome in the unity of the Catholic Church. Such a complete reconciliation he believed to be impossible before the middle of the second century, and to this date he accordingly assigned the composition of the book. He regarded it as devoid of all historical foundation, and without any connection with the Apostle John. From many of these positions criticism has greatly receded. It should, however, be borne in mind, to the credit of this great critic, that he was the first to perceive the plan of composition of the fourth Gospel, and its real unity. The luminous survey of its contents given by him has been of priceless value to subsequent interpreters.

It is now universally recognised that all four Gospels alike must be placed at an earlier date than Baur assigned to them. The data are not sufficient to justify any positive assertion regarding the date of the fourth Gospel. There is only a difference of a few years between the dates reached by Westcott and Harnack. The former would place the appearance of the book quite at the end of the first century, the latter not later than the year 110.

It is not necessary to dwell upon the outward attestation of the Gospel,—partly because this evidence, although strong, leaves room at many

points for uncertainty, and partly because the facts may be found clearly set forth in such easily accessible books as Hastings' *Dictionary*, Westcott's *Commentary on St. John*, and Matthew Arnold's *God and the Bible*.

We cannot greatly err in assuming that there appeared in Asia, about the year 100, this mysterious treatise, which has left a deeper impress upon the religious thought of mankind than any other book of equal compass. The tradition ascribing it to the Apostle John remained unquestioned until the beginning of the last century. Since then, the adverse opinion has, on the Continent at least, steadily gained in strength, so that I know at present of only one eminent scholar who still ventures to uphold the Johannine authorship of the entire Gospel.* In England the greater weight of opinion is still to be found in the opposite scale.

It should be borne in mind that the question is altogether one of probability. Demonstration is not possible. The problem may be stated in a few words. The Apostle John, as he is brought before us in the synoptic Gospels, is a man of strong Jewish feeling, of impetuous temper, and one who has only had such scanty opportunities of learning as were open to ordinary Galileans. He and his elder brother James are fishers on the Lake of Gennesareth when Jesus begins to preach in

* Theodor Zahn.

Galilee, and are among the first to obey His call. The two brothers, with Peter, form the group of three among the Twelve with whom Jesus is most intimately associated, and to whom He gives His most confidential teachings. It is they who receive the Master's revelations upon the last things; it is they who are present at the Transfiguration, and who accompany Christ to Gethsemane. The two brothers, by reason of their impetuous temper, receive from Jesus the appellation "Sons of Thunder," and several incidents illustrate the propriety of this designation. They desire to call down fire from heaven upon the inhabitants of an inhospitable Samaritan village. When John meets an exorcist who uses the name of Jesus in his cures, he wishes to prohibit him because the exorcist is not one of the followers of the Master. The minds of the two brothers, likewise, appear to be inflamed by the apocalyptic hopes of Jews. They desire to occupy the places of honour in the Messiah's kingdom, and thus draw forth the sublime rebuke of Jesus: "*He who will become great among you, let him be your servant; and he who wishes to be foremost among you, let him be the slave of all.*"

These various incidents point to an easily recognisable character. With this character everything subsequently related of John the Apostle harmonises, until we lose sight of him about the year 52. He holds with Peter the foremost position in the Church of Jerusalem. Like Peter, he follows the observances

of Jewish piety. He is to be found daily in the temple. He observes the ritual hours of prayer. He passes with the scribes and elders for a simple, illiterate man. They are astonished that men of so little learning as Peter and John can speak publicly with such confidence. The Epistle to the Galatians shows us John still standing, with Peter and James, the Lord's brother, at the head of the Christians of Jerusalem. He is one of the three pillar Apostles before whom Paul exposes his Gospel. Thus, in the year 52, when the darkness hides his movements, we can only think of him as a Jewish Christian, sharing the sentiments and beliefs of the Lord's first disciples. A period of some forty-seven years passes, during which we know nothing of him. At its close, there appears in Asia Minor the Gospel which, although it does not name him as its author, yet claims some connection with him, designating him, with mysterious reticence, as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Of this Gospel he is regarded by the middle of the succeeding century as the undisputed author. These facts create the problem of the authorship of the fourth Gospel. It is, of the four records of our Lord's doings, the least Jewish, the most universal. Its author pointedly dissociates himself from the Jews. His manner of designating them implies a wide remoteness between him and them. Again, the book is the outcome of a markedly meditative mind. Its author is alive to the deep questions which the acceptance of Jesus as the Saviour of the world

raises. He has pondered over the relation in which those who lived before the coming of the Light stood to the Light which they never beheld. He has asked himself why those who failed to recognise Jesus did so fail. The Gospel also implies some acquaintance with the learning of the time. Its author was familiar, if not with the writings of Philo, at least with the ideas of which these writings are the fullest surviving expression. Once more, a very conspicuous aim of the book is to give a spiritual form to the Messianic hopes and ideas which Christians had inherited from Jews. A spiritual interpretation is thus put upon the second Advent, upon the final Judgment, and upon the bliss of the Messianic kingdom. These are characteristics which we should expect to find in the book of a student and a philosopher.

Is a transformation so complete possible? Or rather—for we do not know the limits of the possible—is it as probable as the supposition of a different authorship of the Gospel? This is the real pivot upon which the question turns. Each critic judges the formal evidence by his previous estimate of the comparative weight of these two probabilities; and this evidence is not sufficiently clear to force his mind back from the conclusion towards which it has been tending.

It is impossible to speak very positively about the general trend of opinion where the literature is so voluminous and varied; but there is, I believe, ground for saying that the two extreme views now

find less general acceptance than what may be called the intermediate opinion. Those who maintain that the fourth Gospel in its entirety, or with the exception of the last chapter, was the work of the son of Zebedee, form, I believe, a small minority. Those who entirely dissociate him from it are likewise a minority, although a larger one. Between these is the large body of writers who incline to the opinion that the Gospel is the workmanship of a writer unknown, who was intimately associated with St. John during the closing years of this Apostle's life, and who took the information gathered in this intercourse and made it the basis of a Gospel in which Christ is exhibited as the Light of the world through its whole history—past, present, and to come.

If we now examine the actual contents of the book, a careful reading of it in the English version reveals at once its three clear divisions. There is the prologue forming the first eighteen verses of the first chapter; there is the section extending from this point to the end of the twelfth chapter; and there is the concluding section containing chapters xiii. to xx. Chapter xxi. has been added by a later hand after the death of John.

In the prologue Christ is majestically presented as the Divine Logos, a term introduced without definition or explanation, and therefore presumably familiar to the readers for whom the book was intended. The designation causes us difficulty because we have no single word to express the two ideas

of thought as it exists within the mind, and thought as it is embodied in language or in symbol. As early as 500 B.C., in the writings of a philosopher born in Ephesus,* we find the universe conceived as the outward embodiment of a pervading law or principle. This law he pictured as attaining to self-consciousness in man, and to it he gave the name of Logos. The term consequently meant for him a pervasive order by which things were kept true to their several types, and their identity preserved. This indwelling order he regarded as itself God.

Such conceptions were quite alien to the minds of Jews, who always represented the Deity as separate and remote from the world. Their poets and prophets, however, following their own paths uninfluenced by Greek philosophy, reached a terminology presenting some similarity to that adopted by the Greeks. To Jewish writers the Divine word meant an utterance to men of God's mind. This utterance they often personified, as in the familiar phrase, "The Word of the Lord came to the prophet." When the Hebrew writings came to be translated into Greek, the Hebrew word, "Memra," with this significance, was rendered by its nearest Greek equivalent, the word "Logos." Thus the two streams of thought met in this common name, but it was the Hebrew rather than the Greek use of the term to which we

* Heraclitus Cf. Professor H. Drummond's *Philo-Judaus* and his *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 297, f.f.

must ascribe the choice of it for his high purpose by the author of the fourth Gospel.

To the current meaning of the term he gave a remarkable extension. Hitherto, the name had, as far as we know, been given only to lifeless things or to personified abstractions. In Greek usage it was the name for the Divine thought, or reason, or law, which found expression in created things, or which dwelt, as the light of reason or conscience, within the human soul. In Hebrew literature it was this Divine thought uttered by prophetic voices, or otherwise communicated to men. But in none of these various expressions was the Divine Nature fully revealed. The heavens could declare the glory, but not the compassion, of God. Human traits could only be revealed in a human character. Hence the sublime opening of our Gospel.

In the beginning was the Divine Thought. It was with God, was itself God. By it all things were made. It was within every human soul as the light of reason.

At a particular moment of time it was manifested in a human form. The incarnate Logos came to those especially His own, the privileged race, and by them was not received. This divine Person the writer of the book has beheld. He is one of those among whom the Word has dwelt, and who have seen His glory.

The real nature of Christ having been thus disclosed, the Saviour Himself appears. His birth

and early days pass unmentioned. With these the Evangelist, having regard to his purpose, has no concern. His object is to exhibit the self-manifestation of the incarnate Word, as a light which gradually unfolds its full splendour. With this object he begins, when the public work of Jesus began, at His baptism.*

Christ, having received the solemn attestation of the Baptist, and, in consequence of it, the immediate adherence of a number of disciples, begins to unfold His glory. He makes Himself known as the founder of a new spiritual order by turning the water into wine in Galilee, by cleansing the temple in Jerusalem, and by proclaiming the universal spiritual worship in His conversation with the woman in Samaria.

With the second miracle (iv. 46) we enter upon the second stage of the self-revelation (iv. 46-vi. 71). Christ now reveals Himself as the source of life and health. He heals the nobleman's son in Galilee, cures the paralytic in Jerusalem, and, again in Galilee, feeds the hungry crowd by the multiplication of the loaves.

In this section we are made aware, for the first time, of a momentous result, by which the self-revelation of Christ begins to be attended.

* It has been asserted that the fourth Evangelist intentionally refrains from any mention of the Baptism, regarding it as derogatory to the divine Subject of his narrative. Readers of the synoptists, however, and for such the fourth Gospel appears to be intended, could hardly fail to see an allusion to the Baptism in 1-32.

While it attracts it also repels. The first murmurings of unbelief are heard on the occasion of the healing of the paralytic on the Sabbath Day. These murmurings become louder when Christ, having fed the multitude, proclaims Himself to be the true bread from heaven, and requires those who desire eternal life to feed upon Him. His disciples dwindle in number as His nature unfolds itself, so that He turns to the Twelve with the sorrowful question: "Will ye also go away?"

The hostility increases and culminates in the section which follows (chapters vii.-xii.). The central image is here light, just as life was the prominent one in the foregoing division. At the feast of tabernacles in the temple, Jesus proclaims Himself to be the Light of the world. The discourse that follows so embitters His enemies that they take up stones to cast at Him. The dominant note of the section still keeps sounding in our ears in the narrative which follows, where a man blind from his birth receives his sight. This physical blindness is made a type of that more real darkness of the Pharisees who say they see. The action now moves rapidly on to its issue. At the ensuing feast of dedication in the temple Jesus solemnly proclaims His unity with the Father. Again His enemies take up stones to stone Him. The final manifestation is given in the raising of Lazarus, by which Christ reveals Himself as the resurrection and the life. A definite separation is made by this closing sign be-

tween the world and the disciples. The Christ has displayed His full glory, with the result that both faith and unbelief have taken their final and unalterable shape.

In the succeeding chapters (xiii.-xvii.), Christ, withdrawn from the world which has rejected Him, communicates His deepest teaching to the small band of the disciples. It is especially in these chapters the thoughts are to be found which give the fourth Gospel a place by itself in Christian literature. The Gospel in its original form, for the last chapter is plainly a later addition, closes with a narrative of the Passion and the Resurrection, which shows a marked independence of the synoptic tradition, and by its introduction of many minute details, would suggest that its author was drawing upon the recollections of some eye-witness.

This rapid survey of the contents of the fourth Gospel will reveal its most conspicuous characteristic. We are struck by the marked symbolism by which it is throughout pervaded. The events recorded are arranged and presented in such a way that they become vehicles of ideas. The facts are narrated, not according to their chronological order, but according to the place they fill in the self-revelation of Jesus. And this symbolism which marks the general plan of the Gospel is also most noticeable in its separate parts. We receive repeated invitations to search below the surface for a hidden meaning. The idea appears to be shining through

the material veil. To take but one instance, let the reader notice the suggestions of symbolism there are in the narrative of the request of the Greeks that they may be permitted to see Jesus (xii. 20-26): "*Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast: these therefore came to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: Andrew cometh, and Philip, and they tell Jesus. And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*"

Some of the most striking characteristics of the Gospel may here be seen. On the one hand, we notice the care taken to identify the particular Apostles concerned, and to describe their exact procedure. Notwithstanding this matter-of-fact introduction, however, we soon perceive that we are dealing with the loftiest spiritual truths. In the persons of these Greeks we are intended to see the nations of the West drawn towards the Light of the World. Their request that they may be allowed to see the prophet of Galilee expresses the longing of the Gentiles to hear the message of the Christ. So the incident is understood by Jesus, who at once addresses Himself to the spiritual

purport of the commonplace occurrence. He solemnly declares that the hour of His glory, when He should draw all men unto Him, has come, and then proclaims, under the image of the dying grain, the central truth of His Gospel. The Greeks, having thus fulfilled the purpose of their introduction, disappear from view. We are not even told whether their request was granted. Our interest, having been once withdrawn from the material and temporal, is not allowed to return to it again.

But it is in the narratives of the miracles or signs, as they are here called, that we see the symbolism of the Gospel most plainly. Of the seven miracles recorded, the parabolic character of at least six is quite apparent. In the first, the relation of the new dispensation to the old is symbolised by the turning of the water into wine. In the healing of the nobleman's son, and in the cure of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda, Christ is made known as the bestower of eternal life. He himself invites us to see this meaning in the cure when He says, in the discourse to which it forms a text: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.*" In the feeding of the multitudes Christ similarly makes Himself known as the living bread. The giving of sight to the man born blind reveals Him as the source of spiritual light. And in the

closing sign of the raising of Lazarus He once more bids us see the type of a spiritual reality, the present resurrection and endless life which shall be the portion of those who believe on Him (xi. 25): "*I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he die yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.*" Thus constantly there is a suggestion of a hidden meaning. The material is treated as if its value lay in the indication it gave of the spiritual.

It would seem to be a misuse of a book such as this to consult it in order to learn the facts of history, or to compare it with the synoptic Gospels in order to measure its trustworthiness as an historical record. If we should be forced to make such a comparison, there can be no question to which of the two authorities the greater historical fidelity must be assigned. The synoptic picture of Jesus is much more of an actual likeness than the picture of St. John. The parables and sayings of the first three Gospels represent His actual manner of teaching more nearly than the discourses of the fourth Gospel. If there should be a conflict between the two records regarding any particular fact, such as the day of the Crucifixion, the earlier authority should be put before the later one. We may admit all this while yet we unfeignedly believe that a true interpretation of the person and work of Christ is contained in the fourth Gospel, and that its author may have had access to sources of informa-

tion which enabled him, at certain points, to complete, and perhaps to correct, the earlier narratives.

It is not, however, when regarded as history that the book will yield its full meaning. We must follow its own invitation, repeatedly and distinctly given, and look upon the facts narrated as the symbols or veils of ideas. We must recognise that the author has selected from the Gospel narratives those incidents which enabled him to present Christ as the life and the light of the world. He sets forth His purpose Himself in the closing verse of the Gospel: "*Many other signs did Jesus in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.*"

Approaching the Gospel then, with this key in our hands, we observe that the beliefs of the Church receive here, for the first time, a spiritual and universal form. They assume a shape in which they can be appropriated by mankind at large. They are disengaged from the vesture, familiar to Jews but strange to men of other nationalities, which they had hitherto worn. The necessity of such a transformation had been made apparent by the march of events. By the end of the first century, the Temple, with the whole ritual system of which it was the centre, was a thing of the past. Christianity had spread far and wide, and no bounds could be set to

its future progress. The faith had come in contact with the speculative intellect of the Gentile world, and the statement of it in a universal form had become imperative.

The need thus created found its satisfaction in the fourth Gospel. In the discourses of Jesus as they are here presented, and more especially in those which form chapters xiii.-xvii., we see the accomplishment of a task which has been said to form the paramount religious need of our own age, the translation of historical fact into the terms of spiritual experience. The eternal import of what had hitherto been conceived as occurrences happening once in time is here laid bare.*

In the synoptic Gospels, as has been said, we meet with two opposite conceptions of the Kingdom of God. In some passages this Kingdom is represented as a future consummation to be ushered in by an overturning of the present order of things. A great convulsion is shadowed forth by which the citizens of the Kingdom shall be separated from its enemies. A new heaven and a new earth shall be created, and the people of God shall dwell securely in a state established and guarded by Him. Such is the conception many of the words of Jesus, as reported in the synoptic Gospels, suggest; and such no doubt was the ordinary form of the contemporary

* Cf. Amiel's saying: *Le déplacement du christianisme de la région historique dans la région psychologique est le vœu de notre époque.*

Jewish Messianic hope. Such was the expectation of the millenarian Papias, as expressed in the well-known passage in which he expatiates upon the fertility of the vines in the Messianic kingdom.

There are, however, as has been seen, in these Gospels sayings informed by a different conception, where the Kingdom is represented, not as a future consummation, but as an actual possession of the spirit. Of these the most emphatic is the solemn declaration of Jesus (Luke xvii. 21): "*The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, there! for lo, the Kingdom of God is within you.*" We might say that these last sayings most truly expressed the actual thought of Jesus, if those conveying the other meaning were not equally numerous and well-attested. In the fourth Gospel, however, we find that the first conception is missing, and that the second alone remains. No material convulsion is anticipated in these calm discourses, nor any separation between the friends and enemies of Jesus except that which is already in progress. Already the great division is being accomplished and the gulf fixed. As the light displays its full glory, it brings into view, with growing distinctness, both the good and the evil in the human heart. The separation thus effected is the judgment: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment,*

but hath passed out of death into life." The future will only confirm the verdict already pronounced: "*The hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of Man . . . they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgment.*" The truth is stated still more plainly by the Evangelist speaking in his own person: "*God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him. He that believeth on Him is not judged; he that believeth not hath been judged already. And this is the judgment that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light*" (iii. 17, 18, 19).

Again, the personal advent of Christ, the object of so many material visions, is here transferred from the domain of the flesh into that of the spirit. This advent has already taken place within the soul of him who loves Jesus and keeps his sayings. To him Jesus has already come. He already occupies the place which Jesus has prepared for him in the Father's house. For this touching image symbolises here the spiritual home of those who obey the promptings of that eternal life which Jesus possessed and came to manifest. They have a dwelling-place of which they cannot be dispossessed; they are as sons in the house of their Father. In the consciousness of this union they are released from the bondage of sin and from its restlessness: "*Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin, and*

the bond-servant abideth not in the house for ever: the Son abideth for ever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (viii. 34, 35).

In the knowledge of Christ and the Father thus gained resides the bliss of Heaven and the life eternal. They who thus love Jesus and keep His sayings have ascended with Him to the heavenly places. A bond of union between them and their Master has been knit which is immaterial, and consequently beyond the reach of death. If they ask whether the future holds no greater joys than those now accessible, the Evangelist would have answered, with Fichte: "Full surely indeed there lies a blessedness beyond the grave for those who have already entered upon it here, and in no other form or way than that by which they can already enter upon it here, in this moment; but by mere burial man cannot arrive at blessedness, and in the future life and throughout the whole infinite range of all future life, they would seek for happiness as vainly as they have already sought it here, if they were to seek it in aught else than in that which already surrounds them so closely here below that throughout eternity it can never be brought nearer to them—in the Infinite." But he sorrowfully adds that "the poor child of eternity, surrounded on all sides by his heavenly inheritance, which yet his trembling hand fears to grasp, wanders with fugitive and uncertain step throughout the waste, everywhere labouring to establish for himself a dwelling-place, but happily ever reminded by the downfall of each of

his successive habitations that he can find peace nowhere but in his Father's house."*

Thus to the writer of this last Gospel was revealed the central truth that the mind is its own place, and is able to make a hell of heaven, a heaven of hell. If the mind is changed, the whole world is changed with it. If the mind be left unchanged, no outward transformation can bring peace to the restless spirit. He who dwells with Jesus in filial trust and obedience is in heaven, though he be in poverty and suffering. He who has gained the whole world and lost his own soul is in the outer darkness. Again, the only real union with Jesus is an ethical union, a likeness to Him in heart and life, in will and purpose, in spirit and character. Where this likeness exists there Jesus is, where it does not exist there Jesus is not. "*He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. . . . I will manifest Myself unto him. . . . My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*" (xiv. 21-24).

We have only to state this teaching to perceive its great sublimity, and the difficulties which would hinder its general comprehension and acceptance. Ages would be needed before the conceptions of Christians generally could rise to such lofty heights. These difficulties are indeed repeated in greater or less degree within each individual experience. It is

* *The Way towards the Blessed Life* (translated by Dr. W. Smith), p. 10.

but slowly that we perceive the full scope of such teaching and recognise in it the key of all difficulties, the solution of all perplexities. Certain it is that the fourth Gospel was no effectual bulwark against the inroad upon Christendom of materialistic ideas. Soon its ethical and spiritual union with Christ was displaced by an external and mechanical one. They and they only were Christ's who professed the Church's creed, and fought for her interests. Heaven was lifted out of the soul, and carried away to a distant world. Admittance to it was reserved for the future, and gained most surely by the sacrifice of this life and the evasion of its responsibilities. Judgment again became a day of vengeance, and eternal punishment was interpreted to mean an endless duration of physical torment. Still the Divine Gospel raised its silent protest against these misrepresentations of the teaching of Christ, and brought, we may be sure, the minds of some in every generation to a knowledge of the truth. It remains to this day for minds resembling that of the philosopher already quoted, the supreme Gospel, the highest and truest presentation in the New Testament of the person and work of Christ.

When we even compare the religious consciousness of St. Paul with that revealed in many passages of this Gospel we seem to have passed from labour to fruition, from struggle to conquest, from aspiration to attainment. "With St. Paul," it has been well said, "we seem to see that in process of

being which with John is already complete. *There* there is effort, *here* possession; *there* desire, *here* enjoyment; *there* movement, *here* rest. *There* faith struggles through the dark clouds of the present into the wished-for country where its dead will arise; *here* the child-like soul sees through the clear blue air the future as already present, and its dead have put off their grave clothes. *There* the disciple humbles himself reverently before the Lord, *here* the Lord stoops to the disciple as to a friend; *there* the tired runner awaits the crown of life on the day when he shall be the object of a glorious transformation, *here* the crown and the transformation have long since become the portion of the victor.”*

* E. Reuss, quoted by Holtzmann: *Neutestamentliche Theologie*.

CHAPTER VI.

PRESENT POSITION OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

Previous epochs of religious development: (1) the fourth century, (2) the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, (3) the sixteenth century—A new epoch prepared by the intellectual movement of the last century—General conclusion forced upon us by the critical study of the Bible—The changes in our view of the Bible may be summed up in the gradual transformation of the conception of God—Meaning of the Divine name in the Old Testament—Differences between the earlier and later books—Change effected by Christ—Divine immanence—Gains to be hoped for from its increased recognition—Conclusion.

HUMAN thought on religious, as on other subjects, has not followed an even and continuous course. There have been moments when it has moved with startling rapidity, and long intervals during which it has appeared to be stationary. The stream has had its rapids, when the water has hurried on with headlong impatience, as well as its long level reaches.

If we look at the Christian centuries, three periods seem to stand out especially as periods of rapid change. The first occurred when the new faith found a home in minds with the habits and tendencies born of Greek culture. The new converts brought into the Church the cravings

incidental to their birth and their education. They insisted upon reducing their beliefs to intellectual harmony, and upon defining them with philosophical precision. The necessity thus created gave rise, first to those speculations to which the general name of Gnosticism has been given, and subsequently to the Christological controversies of the third and the fourth centuries. From this prolonged intellectual ferment the creeds of Christendom issued. The metaphysical expression was given to Christian doctrine with which we are familiar in the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds. If we seek a name for the entire period characterised by this intellectual movement, which was at its height in the third century, we may call it the Greek epoch of Christian theology.

The impulse thus given died slowly away. The Athanasian Creed,* the last word in a long debate, did not reach its present form until the sixth or seventh century. And it is not until we reach the twelfth century that we again find the mind of

* The Quicunque vult consists, in Dr. Harnack's opinion, of two distinct documents, of which the first deals with the doctrine of the Trinity, and the second exclusively with the Incarnation. He thinks that the first of these must have been a confession of faith used by the clergy and monks of Southern Gaul in their dealings with the Arian Wisigoths of Spain during the fifth and the first half of the sixth centuries. He regards the origin of the Christological document as completely obscure, but observes that it must be placed before the ninth century. Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte*, ii. p. 298; cf. Battifol, *Histoire du Bréviare Romain*, p. 181.

Christendom deeply agitated by new ideas. The impulse proceeded in this case from the revived study of writings which had been in the possession of the world for centuries—the works of Aristotle. The neglect into which these writings had fallen must apparently be ascribed to the faultiness of the Latin translations in which the Greek words were alone accessible. “Hitherto” (writes Robertson, *History of the Christian Church*, vii. 467) “the acquaintance of western readers with this philosopher’s writings had been confined to one or two books which were accessible in the old translations of Victorinus and Boethius; but he now (in the thirteenth century) became more fully known, partly through translations from the Arabic versions current in Spain, and partly through direct translations from the original.” The effect of this revived study was to free the philosopher from the suspicion with which the Church had long regarded him, and to make him for a time the object of her peculiar veneration. The principles of formal reasoning followed in his writings were made use of by the Church’s teachers to establish her creeds, and to illuminate the wide spaces which she had still left in darkness. Schools for the purposes of such study were formed in all the great monasteries, and that method of discussing a subject, by arraying the arguments on each side in syllogistic form, which characterised the schoolmen, the teachers and pupils of these schools, was followed with

great eagerness during a whole century. The theology which thus arose, and of which the most illustrious exponent was Thomas Aquinas, may be called the Latin theology.

The third period of quickened interest and rapid change was the sixteenth century. The new learning, as it was called, the revived study of Greek, had re-opened the pages of the New Testament. The simplicity of the earliest Christian faith was seen in sharp contrast against its actual complexity. The Church of the Apostles was re-discovered, and compared with the Church of those evil days when, although the Lord was still present, He appeared to be asleep in the ship. The result was a vehement appeal from tradition to Scripture, from the existing Church to the Bible. Christendom, to use the apt metaphor of a great scholar,* woke up from its dogmatic slumber, and found that it was resting with its whole weight upon Church authority. It turned round in angry alarm, and fled for refuge to the protection of the sacred Book. It opposed the document to the institution.

It has long since become apparent that the intellectual basis upon which the Reformers thus rested their system was hastily chosen and insecure. They laid themselves open to the charge of selecting from the mass of existing Church doctrines those which pleased them, and rejecting the rest. It was impossible for them to prove that some of the most

* Mark Pattison.

central of the doctrines which they did retain were to be found, as they received them, in Scripture. Moreover, the book whose protection they invoked was one regarding whose origin and nature they were quite content to accept the testimony of tradition. Erasmus is said to have drawn attention to the characteristics which make the Epistle to the Ephesians unique among the Pauline writings, and Luther, as is well known, described the Epistle of James as an epistle of straw. The Reformers might consider that the doctrines which they identified with Christianity were to be found more explicitly in some parts of the New Testament than in others; but that the Gospels and Pauline Epistles were authorities beyond the reach of criticism they did not doubt. Thus they accepted the book to which they made their triumphant appeal on the testimony of the very tradition which, at so many points, they passionately repudiated.

We have no difficulty in perceiving that the position thus chosen could only be a halting-place on the road. Sooner or later the book to which this supreme authority had been assigned would be subjected to the same unsparing criticism to which the Reformers had exposed the ecclesiastical traditions. Christendom would again awake from its slumbers to find that it was resting now with its whole weight upon the authority of a book for whose origin it only had the evidence of tradition.

This inevitable moment came, as we saw, at the

end of the eighteenth century. The inquiry which then began has continued to our own day. The traditional view of the origin of all the various books of Scripture has been repeatedly and vigorously challenged. These books have been compared with each other with the object of discovering the differences in their attitude towards the never-varying spiritual problems. They have been compared with the sacred books of other religions, and what they had in common with these has been carefully noted. No separate field within the whole area of study opened by the Bible has escaped attention. And investigation has everywhere been as free and unfettered as it has been minute. This prolonged critical inquiry into the origin of the Scriptures has set a distinctive mark upon the nineteenth century, and it may well be that the historian will count this century as one of the marked epochs of Christian theology.

The time has not yet come when we can accurately measure the religious results of this research. The critical movement has not yet reached its end. The noises of battle are still in our ears. We have hardly yet begun to survey the consequences of established conclusions, or to gauge their effects upon faith. It is admitted that the intellectual expression of Christian faith needs, at many points, re-statement or re-construction; but such re-construction can hardly yet be said to have begun. No finality will be claimed for the attempts of this kind

made by Ritschl* and his followers in Germany, and by T. H. Green in England. The work is one which has still to be accomplished.

Meantime, we can mark one general conclusion forced upon us by the century's study of the Bible. We have been brought to recognise the essential relativity of its contents. The revelation of Christ is communicated to us in the language and the ideas of a particular age. To perceive clearly its purport we have not only to learn the vocabulary of a bygone day: we must also familiarise ourselves with ideas widely different from our own. This is a fact of which we have often had occasion to take notice. The revelation of Christ in the mind of St. Paul was a revelation to the world at large through the medium of an altogether unique personality, trained in one of the schools of Jewish wisdom. The heavenly vision vouchsafed to the Apostle has become the property of all mankind in the form and with the interpretation which he, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, attached to it. In the synoptic Gospels we see Jesus as He seemed to the first generation of Christians to be. The profound impression which His personality made upon them is imparted to us. His cures of sickness are recorded in the terms prescribed to them by their interpretation of bodily and spiritual phenomena, their apprehension of the ever mysterious connection of matter and mind. His words are presented to us in the colours which they,

* See Appendix, Note C, "The Ritschlian Theology."

with their limitations and their needs, necessarily put upon them. In the fourth Gospel, the Messianic kingdom and its joys, the second Advent, the judgment of the world, receive a universal and spiritual interpretation. They are transferred from the region of the flesh to that of the spirit. This Gospel is thus an evidence that the necessity of a task such as that now laid again upon us, the task of disengaging the relative from the universal, the temporary from the permanent in the earliest Christian records, was felt by the end of the first century.

That all the books of the Bible must alike be read in the light of the knowledge of their own age would now be universally admitted. If we would read them aright, we must carry ourselves back into a distant past. We must look at the world with the eyes of the writer, and not with our own eyes. Our business is not to convict him of error each time his view of the world conflicts with our own, but to learn the religious lessons he strove to teach. This is a truth which, obvious as it now seems, has, even among the learned, only recently found general acceptance. Its recognition would have precluded all those attempts, of which the last is but of yesterday, to bring the statements of Genesis i. into harmony with what is now taught by science. All these attempts ignored the interval separating the writers of Genesis from ourselves. They proceeded upon the assumption that we both formed the same conception of the universe. Writing some few years

ago of some of these schemes of reconciliation then recent, Dr. Driver found it still necessary to say that "The true solution of the problem presented by the cosmogony of Genesis would only be found by those scholars who read it in the light of the age in which it was written, and who, while not forgetful of its spiritual teaching, interpreted it, on its material side, in accordance with the place which it holds in the history of Semitic cosmological speculation."

Similar words might be used of all the books of the Bible. The writers of the Gospels, no less than the authors of Genesis, lived at a particular moment of time, and breathed the atmosphere of the time in which they lived. We must read their words in "the light of the age in which they were written." This is a duty imposed upon us by the fact that the revelation of Christ is presented through the medium of one particular historical situation.

It has been the aim of these chapters to show that the religious value of the Gospels is not impaired by the fullest recognition of this fact. As we read their pages we can still feel the power of Christ to heal and to save. When we examine His teaching we find that, while there is a section of it which is involved in uncertainty, the greater part of it is clear and of perpetual application. Our sense of the personal power of Christ and of the value of His teaching is so vivid that we need not look elsewhere for the origin and explanation of Christianity.

The modern reader of the Bible, however, must

often feel that the various changes, incidental to the progress of thought, which obscure its meaning, may all be comprehended under one general transformation. The central word of the Bible has, in the course of centuries, slowly, but with increasing rapidity in recent years, changed its significance. The name of God has lost some of its contents and acquired others. This is the most fundamental of all the shiftings of relative position which separate us from John and Paul as well as from David and Isaiah. It is also, we may believe, the most frequent reason of a rejection of the Church's ministry or a disavowal of her creeds. Intellectual dissatisfaction with Christianity, if it were to express itself, would be found, I believe, to have this as its commonest root. The reader of the Bible feels that he cannot attach a definite meaning to the great name of God. It has been emptied, bit by bit, of its weight, until but little remains. He asks who and what the Being is of whose doings the book is full, and of whom it speaks with so intimate a knowledge. A consideration of the difficulty thus expressed will reveal some existing religious tendencies, and perhaps justify a forecast of the future.

It will be observed, then, that nowhere in the Bible does the name of God receive any definition or explanation. The great reality is assumed throughout to be known. Although this assumption, however, is persistently made, God is none the less always represented in the Old Testament as veiled in impenetrable

mystery. No earthly similitude of the Divine Being exists or is allowed to be made. And if the various passages are examined, in which a meeting between the creature and Creator is indicated, it will be seen that the supreme revelation is not represented in any of them as having actually taken place. The curtain, which appears to be on the point of being withdrawn, is never actually lifted. God remains hidden from mortal eyes. Thus, nowhere in the book does the sacred name receive elucidation by means of either express definition or authoritative symbol.

It is, however, equally noticeable that the name of God suffers a gradual change of meaning as we pass from the earlier to the later books. The conception is gradually divested of those human features by which it was at first marked. It becomes less clearly outlined, less within the compass of human thought. While we read in Genesis of God descending from heaven, walking in the garden in the cool of the day, feeling anger and repenting, we find Him pictured by Isaiah as one whose ways and thoughts are as far removed from those of men as the heavens from the earth, one that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, to whom its inhabitants are as grasshoppers, and by whom the nations are counted as the small dust of the balance. The distance between the two conceptions of God thus revealed is very marked, and prophetic of future development. The thoughts of men, drawn towards the ultimate Reality, have

moved away from the known and the definable towards the spaces which have no limits, the sea which has no shore. The sacred name has acquired a meaning less easy to fix or define. But although the great conception had thus lost, in the golden age of Jewish prophecy, that human likeness which it once bore, there is no evidence that God was yet conceived by the nation at large under any other form than as a "magnified and non-natural man."

"While every material representation of Deity," says Mr. C. Montefiore,* "was (after the exile) rigorously forbidden,—and thus even the popular imagination did not probably picture its God in the likeness of man,—the God of the post-exilic period and of Judaism generally, was very 'personal' and 'transcendent.' God was transcendent, however, not as being distant and unapproachable, but because the conception of Him was so very simple and child-like; partly, also, He remained transcendent because of the mere weight and mass of scriptural authority. In this point, as in several others, Judaism was overburdened with the letter and the supposed literal truth of a collection of holy writings, many ideas in which it had entirely outgrown, but which unfortunately were more and more regarded as infallibly accurate and verbally inspired."

As the word "transcendent" in this quotation is of frequent occurrence wherever this subject is treated, it may perhaps not be unnecessary to say that it

* *Hibbert Lectures.*

conveys the opposite idea to that borne by the word "immanent." God is conceived as transcendent when He is pictured as apart from the world and from man; He is conceived as immanent when He is thought of as manifesting Himself within nature and the human spirit. The first of these two conceptions was the dominant, perhaps we may say the only, conception of the generation in which Christ was born. While no doubt there were some whose relationship with God had that intimacy which personal religion never fails to impart, to the majority the name meant an unapproachable Being, related to Israel only as his Law-giver and his Judge. "The idea of God," observes Dr. Sanday, of the Judaism contemporary with Christ, "was too transcendent. It had no adequate means of spanning the gulf between man and God. The whole conception of immanent Divine forces, circulating through the organism, has no true analogy in it."

The New Testament, like the Old, contains neither definition nor explanation of the sacred name. But although Jesus thus abstained, as His method was, from any formal definition, yet His entire life, as well as His language, did undoubtedly invest the name of God with a new significance. A more intimate union with the Eternal Mind and Will than any hitherto known was directly suggested by His life and His words. His followers saw Him acting through His whole ministry as if the Unseen Goodness had, in His person, visited the earth,

as if God were moving in a human shape among men.

This intimate union of Jesus with the Father receives its most emphatic expression in the fourth Gospel, which, here as elsewhere, certainly unfolds the implications of the words of Christ, if it does not contain the words themselves. "*I and my Father,*" Jesus solemnly declares to the Jews, "*are one.*" "*He that hath seen Me,*" He assures His apostles, "*hath seen the Father.*" And He gave His followers the key to the interpretation of this union when He represented it as parallel to their relationship with Himself. His prayer on their behalf was that the Divine indwelling of which He was conscious might also be extended to them (John xvii. 21).

The conception of the immanence of God is scarcely less apparent in the writings of St. Paul. The various expressions in which he describes his relationship to Christ as an indwelling of Christ in him directly suggest this conception. So, too, do his repeated allusions to the Spirit of God or of Christ,—for sometimes he uses the one phraseology and sometimes the other,—who dwells in human hearts, and reveals His presence by the traits of the Christian character.

Thus, if Gospels and Epistles be compared with the books of the Old Testament with the object of marking the change effected by Christ in the Jewish conception of God, this change must be described in the way above indicated. It is the substitution

of a Deity who dwells within man, and manifests His presence by those human experiences of love, joy, peace, and the other constituents of the Apostle's well-known catalogue, for a Deity apart from him, the occupant of a distant Heaven. The sacred name, in other words, means, or may mean for a Christian, an unseen source of Goodness, of which he knows through emotions and impulses of his own spirit, and through the fruits of character in which these issue. This is his knowledge of God. He makes no affirmations about the Divine nature as this nature is in itself. The source of all his knowledge of the Reality which he feels after, but which he cannot grasp, is his own spirit and his own life. This is the pool in which the great light is reflected; it is the mirror through which he now darkly sees. Such was at least the direction of, perhaps, the greatest change effected by Christianity. We shall not expect to find on such a subject uniformity of expression among the Church's teachers; still, it would scarcely be rash to affirm that this conception of an immanent Deity appears plainly wherever Christian feeling reaches its greatest depth and intensity.

It has been asserted by a suggestive living writer * that there are two types of theology which may generally and for convenience be described as that of the Greek and that of the Latin fathers respectively, or as Eastern and Western. The

* Archdeacon Wilson: *Hulsean Lectures*.

fundamental and dominant thought of the one is the Divine Indwelling; the fundamental and dominant thought of the other is the Divine Transcendence. Whether a generalisation so wide is justifiable or not, we may at least believe that the conception of Divine immanence would find a more congenial soil in Greek than in Latin Christendom. And it will not be questioned that the conception of God as a Transcendent Person has been the dominant, if not the exclusive, one within the Latin Church since her creed received an authoritative interpretation from the theologians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. His relationship with men was pictured by them under forms suggested by the Roman law, and was described in terms borrowed from the law-courts. A theory of atonement was thus formulated whose evil influence is still felt, and which has been truly characterised* as throughout a piece of forensic speculation.

It is from this theology that multitudes among ourselves, as elsewhere, derive their notions of Christianity. And we cannot wonder that those of them who pass beyond conventional belief find themselves immediately confronted by a startling difficulty. They ask what is the ground of these confident affirmations regarding a Being who is admittedly beyond the sight and the comprehension of man? Whence has this knowledge so loudly

* By Dr. Fairbairn.

proclaimed been derived? How do these our teachers know that God has acted or will act in the way they describe? This is the just protest of an agnosticism which may be as reverent and well-founded as was that of Job when he exclaimed: "*Behold I go forward but he is not there; and backward but I cannot perceive him. On the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold him; He hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him.*"

A consummate literary expression was given to this recoil from the licence of affirmation about the Divine Being then, and perhaps still, prevalent, by Matthew Arnold. It would not now be maintained that the general account of religion given in *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible* is borne out by the facts of history. It cannot be supposed, as these books seem to imply, that the course of religion through the world has been a passage from an early simplicity and purity to a gradually increasing complexity and corruption. Investigation makes us confident that, here as elsewhere, the imperfect has preceded the more perfect, the natural has culminated in the spiritual. A passage in the Book of Joshua makes it clear that the ancestors of Abraham were idolators, and it is most probable that the patriarch's own faith was only a little purer than that of his fathers. Yet the author of these books did, I believe, touch a real defect both of our learned and our popular theology

when he said that "terms which with the writers of the Bible are literary terms, theologians have employed as if they were scientific terms."

He points, as the supreme instance of this mistake, to the theological use of the central term of religion, the term "God." He may not be successful in his attempt to express the Biblical significance of this term by an equivalent phrase; but there is still good reason for his assertion that "people use this word as if it stood for a perfectly definite and ascertained idea, from which we might, without more ado, extract propositions and draw inferences, just as we should from any other definite and ascertained idea." "For instance," he proceeds, "I open a book which controverts what its author thinks dangerous views about religion, and I read: 'Our sense of morality tells us so and so; our sense of God, on the other hand, tells us so and so.' And again, 'the impulse in man to seek God' is distinguished as if the distinction were self-evident, and explained itself, from the impulse in man to seek his highest perfection." His contention in these books, and to me it seems convincing, is that the sacred name is misused when it is regarded as the expression of a fixed and clearly-defined meaning. It is not this, but a term thrown out, so to speak, at a not fully-grasped object of the speaker's consciousness.*

The truth which this writer laboured, with so much charm of language, to enforce will receive due re-

* *Literature and Dogma.*

cognition if it be remembered that the name of God, as it is used in the Bible, conveys to the mind two distinct suggestions. Sometimes it expresses the thought of a distant Being, who has created man, who watches his doings with a task-master's eye, and will hold him accountable for his misdeeds. This image is undoubtedly to be found in the Bible, and has been adopted by popular theology as its only likeness of the Most High. But the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament present another conception, less tangible and consequently more liable to be neglected, as we find in actual fact that it has been. This is the image of a Source of Goodness, unseen and indescribable, who is known to man by the impulses to goodness within his own spirit, and the fruits of life in which these impulses issue. In yielding to these impulses and in bearing these fruits, man feels his kinship with the Divine. He realises that he is the Son of God, and recognises by the emphatic witness of his own consciousness that the Creative Power of the universe is making his life the minister of its purposes. The knowledge of the highest good which he thus gains is the knowledge of God. This knowledge is eternal life; the happiness which flows from it is the bliss symbolised by Heaven. Such is the practical issue of much of the language of the fourth Gospel and the Pauline Epistles.

We have only to unfold the implicit applications of this teaching to perceive that it satisfies many of

the importunate demands now made upon Christianity, and silences many of the objections urged against its claims.

It is insisted that religious belief must rest henceforth not upon the ground of authority, but upon that of experience. "We cannot," it is said, "believe merely because we are bidden to believe; we can only believe what we feel to be true." Or, in the words of Pascal, "In good truth the world is getting mistrustful and does not believe things unless they are evident to it." Of the conception of God as immanent within the human spirit, the means of verification are always within a man's reach. He may verify every assertion about the Divine Being by the test of experience. He sees God in the degree in which he himself is pure of heart. God is formed within him as he climbs up upon the ladder of being.

Again, it is required that religion shall reach its ends by natural and orderly processes. We do not admit the possibility of miracle if by miracle is meant a violation of the natural order. We do not claim a complete knowledge of this order; but we believe it to be coeval with time, conterminous with the universe. This doctrine of God presupposes no miracle. It affirms that our ideas of Him grow with our own growth, that the reward of obedience is an increase of insight.

Once more, religion is asked to prove its own claims by furthering the present welfare of men,

by mediating between rich and poor, making wealth less selfish and poverty less crushing, making all alike feel their need of a common salvation. He who thinks of God as this teaching bids him, knows that the moral life to which he feels himself called has no reality apart from the active service of mankind. He cannot love God whom he has not seen, if he does not love his brother whom he has seen.

Finally, the study of history gains a new motive, and man himself is ennobled, when it is recognised that in following his traces across the earth we are watching the progress of a creature in whose struggles and achievements the Unseen Goodness has been revealing His features, and making known His name.

The eliciting of the various consequences wrapped up in this conception of God, the examination of the articles of the Christian Creed in its light, and the re-interpretation of Christian doctrine by its assistance—this is the work of many generations. "One man's life," said Goethe, "what is it?" But even within a single life-time something may be done to soften a transition which cannot be painlessly accomplished, and to re-kindle the meaning of great words which for many have ceased to burn. It is as a humble effort towards this wished-for consummation that the foregoing pages have been written.

APPENDIX.



NOTE A, PAGE 9.

GERMAN AND ENGLISH CRITICISM.

THE statement in the text, that German critics are less in the habit than English scholars of distinguishing rigidly between facts, probabilities, and possibilities, has already been made by Matthew Arnold in his preface to *God and the Bible*, and might perhaps be substantiated by a reference to some of the representative writers of the two countries. The accusation implied in it, is however one of which very few constructive critics or historians of any nationality would be able to prove themselves guiltless. In the work of reconstructing the past complete certainty is rarely attainable. The step from men's actions to their motives is a difficult and perilous one. Even if a complete contemporary chronicle of the events of a period lay before us, different interpretations of their spiritual significance might still be possible. The room for uncertainty is much wider, and the probability of erroneous inference greater, when the contemporary authorities are few and fragmentary. None the less is the historian

of a period compelled to present his own view of its personages and their doings. He cannot stop at every stage of his narrative to apprise the reader that what follows is only conjectural. Hence the most conscientious chronicler can hardly fail to give his narrative a greater appearance of certainty than he can really claim for it.

The task of reconstructing the first century of Christian history is as arduous a one as any writer can undertake. The contemporary documents are few and brief. For our knowledge of the apostolic age, in particular, we are entirely dependent upon writings of which the earliest was not composed till twenty years after the Crucifixion, and in which their author had no thought or intention of writing history. If the reader will bear in mind that the only surviving Christian writings which can with certainty be ascribed to the period between the birth of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem (1-70 A.D.) are the Pauline Epistles and the second Gospel, he will perceive the immense difficulty of the historian's task.

We cannot wonder that the literature to which such a period has given rise should abound in hypotheses and conjectures. And if a writer takes to heart the maxim of Goethe: "If I am to listen to another man's opinion, it must be expressed positively. Of things problematical I have enough in myself," he will be likely to write with as much assurance as he can command.

It would be easy to produce, from English as well as from foreign writers on the apostolic age, instances of positiveness of statement greater than the evidence warrants; or of omission to indicate the hypothetical character of the particular view taken. Perhaps the brilliant works of Renan would afford the most promising field for a search after such instances. It will be admitted, however, that whatever may be the requirements of consecutiveness of narrative and luminousness of presentation, strict fidelity to the evidence still remains the historian's foremost duty. To this he should sacrifice every other consideration. If our biblical critics can indeed claim a superiority in this respect over those of other nationalities; if, as Sir Henry Maine declared, a fact is nowhere else in the world held in so great respect as in England, this can only be, as he suggested, because the principles of the English law of evidence have gained among us a widespread recognition and acceptance, and assert themselves in every sphere of the national life. The procedure of the English courts of justice is an ever-present monitor of the necessity of distinguishing between fact and hearsay. We may, however, reasonably hope that these principles will increasingly influence biblical studies in all countries as time passes. As criticism pursues its sifting work, the different shades of probability, in the various questions in dispute, will stand out in strong relief. A body of established conclusions will thus be

formed whose authority it will not be possible to resist. It is such a prospect—not surely a visionary one, nor incapable even of speedy realisation—which affords the best hope of any closer union of a divided Christendom.

NOTE B, PAGE 60.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

As the never-ending controversy upon the Resurrection of Christ has entered upon a new phase in consequence of the criticism of the last century, it may be well to exhibit here the documentary evidence for the fact, and to measure the difference by which the advocates of the two opposing views would seem to be divided.

If we arrange the various testimonies according to the relative authority which critical study would assign to them, they take the following order of precedence:—

1. The testimony of Paul.
2. The testimony of the Marcan document, as represented by the particulars which the first three evangelists have in common.
3. The testimony of the Non-Markan document, as represented by the particulars in which the first and third evangelists concur, but which are not found in the second.
4. The unsupported testimony of the first or the third evangelist.

5. The unsupported testimony of the fourth evangelist.

If we now consult these various authorities in order to establish (1) the fact of the appearances of the risen Jesus, (2) the nature of these appearances, we reach the following conclusions:—

1. All agree that the risen Jesus was seen by many and various believers. The words of St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 1-9) place it beyond doubt that the fact of such vision was universally accepted by the first Christians, and held a foremost place in every proclamation of the Gospel. It is also clear, from other statements of the same apostle, that these appearances held this central place because they were universally regarded as the evidence that the Lord had risen from the dead, and that He lived and reigned in heaven. St. Paul asserts that, if Christ had not been thus “raised,” the faith of his converts would be deprived of its foundation. In these assurances regarding the fact of the appearances of the risen Lord, and its central importance, all the other authorities concur. We may accordingly regard it as certain that the earliest Christians lived in the belief that their Lord had risen from the dead, and that this belief was, in their minds, grounded upon the fact of His having been seen alive by many trustworthy witnesses.

2. We find ourselves in far greater uncertainty when we proceed to inquire regarding the nature of the appearances of the risen Christ. Were they, to

use the current phraseology, subjective or objective? Was Christ nearer to those to whom He thus appeared than He is to ourselves?

The only aid we owe to recent study in our attempt to answer such questions would seem to consist in the more definite exclusion of material associations from the conceptions we form of the risen Christ. The suggestions of such associations are conveyed mainly by the narratives which we have numbered 4 and 5—*i.e.*, by those possessing the weakest relative authority. In the appearance at the sepulchre, it is only in the first Gospel we read of the women *touching* the feet of Jesus. In the other appearances, it is only the third and fourth Gospels which represent Jesus as being *touched* by His disciples, or as *eating* with them. In the fourth Gospel only do we hear of Him showing them His wounds.

Thus, if the results of critical study are accepted, they would seem to bar, more decisively than before, the pathway of material hypotheses and speculation. The particulars just referred to will be felt to rest upon authority too weak to justify us in making them articles of faith. They will not be allowed to affect the general conclusion that the contact of the disciples with the risen Master was, like St. Paul's, a contact of spirit with Spirit, dependent upon no corporeal proximity. It would indeed seem to be the detachment of the Resurrection from the confusing associations of matter which St. Paul aimed

at in his argument with the Christians of Corinth, when he affirmed with such emphasis: "This I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

If these facts are fairly weighed, and the evidence for the various particulars is carefully considered, it would seem to be unjustifiable to characterise either of the two opposing conceptions of the Resurrection of Christ as incompatible with Christian faith. The two views may be thus described:—

1. It is, on the one hand, maintained that the presence of Christ among His disciples during the forty days following the Crucifixion was essentially different from that which subsequent generations were permitted to enjoy. It is held that, during the first short period, Christ was still within the sensual sphere, and might at any moment reveal Himself to the bodily senses of His disciples.

2. The upholders of the other view would refuse to draw any such line of demarcation. They would maintain that, from the Crucifixion onwards, the faithful of all ages have received like assurances of their Master's presence, and that their communion with Him must be described in identical terms. They would regard the vision of Peter as similar in kind to that of Paul, and both alike as examples of that spiritual sight intended in the words of Jesus: "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me

shall be loved of My Father, and I will love Him, and will *manifest* Myself unto him."

When we consider the darkness in which it has pleased God to shroud the days that followed the Crucifixion, the many uncertainties in which our records leave us, the length of time separating us from this distant past, and the unlikelihood of any new fact ever coming to light which would silence controversy, it must seem to be as impolitic as it would be impracticable to attempt to place either of the above theories beyond the limits of admissible variations of doctrine.

We may believe that the essentials of Christian faith on this subject are held when it is recognised that the Lord, His work on earth finished, returned to the Father, passing beyond the sight and hearing of His followers, while yet He remained within the reach of their spiritual apprehension, and controlled their doings by His unseen presence.

NOTE C, PAGE 117.

THE RITSCHLIAN THEOLOGY.

THE Ritschlian Theology, to which reference has been made in the text, deserves the attention of the student as the most serious attempt yet made to exhibit Christianity as the absolute and final religion, while the continuity of the Divine order is fully granted, and the results of historical criticism are accepted. It may be useful to indicate here, as far as this is possible within the narrow limits of a note, some of the distinctive ideas to which this theology has given prominence, and which are now exercising a wide and potent influence.

The life of Albrecht Ritschl, from whom the theology derives its name, extended from 1822 to 1889. He held the chair of theology, first at Bonn, and subsequently at Göttingen. His first considerable work was *The Origin of the Primitive Catholic Church* (Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche), which appeared in its original form in 1850, and subsequently, re-cast and re-written, in 1857. In this book he sets forth a conception of the origin of the Church differing in many essential particulars from that of the then dominant one of

Baur. In the picture of the earlier historian, Catholicity is represented as the outcome of a fusion of Jewish legalism with the spiritual Christianity of St. Paul. The impression is given of a decisive triumph won by the Pauline spirit. Ritschl exhibits the Church as rather the result of a failure to appropriate the Pauline gospel of grace, and the intrusion of legalism in new forms. The book has had a permanent effect upon historical criticism, and its positions have been said by Harnack to have "found acceptance, if not with all, yet with the majority of independent critics" (article in *Contemporary Review*, August 1866, quoted by Professor Orr).

It is, however, by the dogmatic reconstruction of his other great work (*The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*) that Ritschl is chiefly memorable. In this epoch-making book, of which the first edition appeared in 1871-74, and later editions in 1882-83 and in 1888-89, he addresses himself to the doctrine which he believed to hold the central place in the Christian system, that of reconciliation, and, after a critical account of the traditional view, sets forth his own conclusions.

Among these, perhaps the two following points chiefly arrest the reader's attention:—

1. It is held that the source of Christian influence, and consequently the origin of Christianity, must be sought in the personality of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. All theories are rejected which would find this source in ideas detached from the life of the

Founder, or in the independent action of God upon the human soul. Thus the uniqueness of the Christian character, and its paramount influence in the propagation of the faith, are brought into strong relief.

2. It is held, to use the words of Dr. Rashdall (*Doctrine and Development*, preface), that "the Christian knowledge of God is based, not upon speculative reasoning, but upon the conviction wrought in the soul by personal experience of the moral effects of Christ's life." Thus the affirmations of Christian dogma respecting the Godhead are regarded as expressions of what were, in the first instance, experiences of the soul.

We may take as an example the Church's affirmation of the divinity of Christ. The traditional method of substantiating this affirmation has been by an appeal to the self-witness of Jesus, or to the testimony of the apostles. The validity of such an appeal, however, obviously rests upon the perfect trustworthiness of the words to which reference is made. The method is also open to the objection that it makes the conviction of the Lord's divinity rest upon external authority, and not upon personal knowledge. Ritschl would, on the other hand, appeal to the consciousness of the Christian. This consciousness bears witness that to the believer Christ possesses the *worth* of God. In this assurance he would accordingly find the meaning of the affirmation. He did not, however, intend to convey

by this that Christ was merely imagined to be God. He meant that the evidence of Christ's divinity was such as only to be appreciable by the believer. He held that all the judgments within the sphere of religious knowledge possessed this relative and subjective character, and he gave to them, in consequence, the name of *value judgments* (Werth-Urtheile).

The writings of Ritschl have attained to a life beyond their own. They have exercised a powerful influence upon some of the most conspicuous theologians of our time. Harnack, Schürer, and Wendt in Germany, and A. Sabatier in France, while dissenting from many of the conclusions of Ritschl, bear witness to the debt they owe him. An exposition in English of Ritschlianism will be found in Professor Garvie's work, *The Ritschlian Theology*. Much may also be learned of the man and his writings from various books and articles by Professor Orr, who, however, writes from the point of view of a decided opponent.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

OF THE PRINCIPAL WORKS REFERRED TO IN
THE PRESENT VOLUME, OR CONSULTED
IN ITS PREPARATION.

ARNOLD, MATTHEW.—“Literature and Dogma.” Smith-Elder.

ARNOLD, MATTHEW.—“God and the Bible.” Smith-Elder.

BATTIFOL, P.—“Histoire du Bréviaire Romain.” Paris, 1895.

BAUR, F.—“Paulus.” 1845.

BAUR, F.—“Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien.” Tübingen, 1847.

BURY, J. B.—“Inaugural Lecture at Cambridge.” University Press, 1903.

CAIRD, E.—Article, “Christ and Christianity,” in *New World*.

CAIRD, E.—“Hegel.” Blackwood, 1896.

CHEYNE, T. K.—Article, “Messiah,” in *Encyclopædia Biblica*.

DRUMMOND, PROFESSOR H.—“Hibbert Lectures.” 1894.

FAIRBAIRN, A. M.—“Christ in Modern Theology.” Hodder & Stoughton, 8th ed., 1898.

FICHTE.—“Way towards the Blessed Life.” Translated by Dr. W. Smith. London, 1849.

GARVIE, PROFESSOR.—“The Ritschlian Theology.” T. & T. Clark.

GORE, BISHOP.—“Sermon on the Mount.” Murray.

- HARNACK, A.—"Geschichte der Dogmen." Leipzig, 1894.
 „ "Wesen des Christenthums." Leipzig, 1900.
 „ "Christenthum u. Geschichte." Leipzig, 1904.
 HILGENFELD.—"Die Evangelien." Leipzig, 1854.
 HOLTZMANN, H. J.—"Neu-Testamentliche Theologie."
 Leipzig, 1897.
 INGRAM, J. K.—"Outlines of the History of Religion."
 Black, 1900.
 JOWETT.—"Commentary on Epistles to Thessalonians,
 Galatians, and Romans." New ed., 1894.
 LIGHTFOOT, BISHOP.—"Sermons in St. Paul's Cathedral."
 „ " "Sermons on Special Occasions."
 MONTEFIORE, C.—"Hibbert Lectures." 1892.
 MOZLEY, J. B.—"University Sermons."
 NEWMAN, J. H.—"Parochial and Plain Sermons."
 PATMORE, COVENTRY.—"Religio Poetæ." Bell, 1898.
 PATTISON, MARK.—"Essays." Clarendon Press, 1889.
 RÉVILLE, A.—"Jésus Christ." Paris, Fischbacher, 1897.
 RÉVILLE, J.—"Le Quatrième Evangile." Paris, Leroux,
 1901.
 ROBERTSON.—"History of the Christian Church." Murray.
 ROBINSON, DEAN.—"Introduction to the Study of the
 Gospels." Longmans, 1902.
 SANDAY.—Article, "Jesus Christ," in Hastings' D.B.
 STRAUSS.—"Leben Jesu." Tübingen, 1st ed., 1835.
 WENDT, H. H.—"Die Lehre Jesu." Göttingen, new ed.,
 1901. English translation, T. & T. Clark.
 WILSON, J. M.—"Hulsean Lectures." Macmillan.
 WRIGHT, A.—"Synopsis of the Gospels in Greek." Mac-
 millan, 2nd ed., 1903.

THE WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LIMITED, FELLING-ON-TYNE.

